THE STUDENT'S PRIVATE TUTOR

A Reader's Guide to ENGLISH POETRY FROM WORDSWORTH TO ELIOT

(IN QUESTIONS & ANSWERS)

S. C. Mundra

A Reader's Guide to
ENGLISH POETRY
FROM WORDSWORTH TO ELIOT
(In Questions and Answers)

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BROWNING

MATTHEW ARNOLD

W. B. YEATS

T. S. ELIOT

1.
Wordsworth

Q. 1. Write an essay on Wordsworth as a poet of Nature.

Or

Examine Compton Rickett's view that, "It was Wordsworth's aim as a poet to seek for beauty in meadow, woodland and the mountain top, and to interpret this beauty in spiritual terms. He is for ever spiritualising the moods of nature and winning for them moral consolation."

Ans. Wordsworth—the first great poet of Nature

Wordsworth is the high priest of Nature and the poetry of Nature finds its most sublime and sustaining expression in his work. As Alexander Pope is considered by popular opinion and seasoned judgment the poet of the town and of artificial life, so is Wordsworth rightly considered the greatest poet of the countryside and of the life of nature in its physical as well as spiritual aspects. Poets earlier to Wordsworth, like Burns, Cowpar, Crabbe and Goldsmith had exhibited a fine appreciation for the beauties of Nature in its external aspects delineating the lovely spectacles of nature in poems of exquisite beauty and loveliness, but none of them had seen a soul in nature nor were they prepared to take lessons of morality and wisdom from nature. They were adorers of nature's external charms without having any mystical and philosophical approach to its inner life and spiritual message.. It was left to Wordsworth to reveal the inner soul of nature in his poems and to make it a better teacher than moral philosophers of the present and the past. Wordsworth's delight in nature was not confined like the pre-romantic poets to mere external manifestation of the varied charms of nature, but he went a step higher than they to represent nature as a mystical force capable of enlightening and ennobling the human soul and mind. In nature Wordsworth "was concerned for less with the sensuous manifestations that delight most of our Nature poets, than with the spiritual that he finds underlying these manifestations." "With the outward show of things, with nature's bewildering profusion, her teeming concrete life, her riddles, her magical appeal to the eye and the sense of touch" says Compton-Rickett, "he is little concerned." His great contribution to the poetry of nature does not lie in the fact that he could give accurate and closely observed pictures of nature rich and minute in detail but in the fact that he elevated nature to heights of spiritual glory and made it a better teacher emphasizing and asserting that :

One impulse from the vernal wood
May teach you more of man
Of moral evil and of good
Than all the sages can.

Four stages of Wordsworth's treatment of Nature

The predominantly spiritual tone of Wordsworth's appreciation of nature was not a continued process from the day of infancy or boyhood to the days of maturity and philosophic insight into the heart of things. In the *Prelude* or *Growth of a Poet's Mind* we have a complete picture of the evolution of the various stages of his appreciation of nature beginning with the physical plane and ending with the mystical and spiritualistic interpretation of nature The poet's a conception of nature advanced and developed as he grew in years. His attitude towards nature may be classified—(1) The period of the blood. (2) The period of the senses. (3) The period of the imagination, and (4) The period of the soul We shall now deal with these phases of Wordsworth's appreciation and interpretation of nature.

First stage—the period of the blood

Wordsworth's youth and formative years of life were spent in the midst of nature's beautiful surroundings. In this first stage his love for nature was without any mystical and spiritual touch. In this first stage. his love for nature, in the words of W H. Hudson, "was a healthy boy's love of the open air and freedom of the fields." In his youth he was attracted by the physical beauty of nature, and he haunted the hills and the vales for the sake of angling, snaring birds, hunting and enjoying the lovely spectacles of nature's varied life. He cared at this stage for "the coarser pleasures of my boyish days, and their glad animal movements all gone by." In the first period he loved nature with a passion which was all physical, without having any tinge of intellectual or philosophical association. He bounded over the mountains like a roe :

In youth from rock to rock I went,
From hill to hill in discontent.
Of pleasure high and turbulent
Most pleased when most uneasy.

Second stage—the period of the senses

It was the age of sweet sensations. He was thrilled and enchanted by the sights and sounds of Nature. Referring to the boyish delights of this period when he viewed nature with a physical passion, he writes boldly in *Tintern Abbey* :

The sounding cataract
Haunted me like a passion, the tall rock
The mountain and the deep gloomy woods;
Their colour and their forms, were then to me
An appetite: a feeling and a love.

Third stage—the period of the imagination

The first rumblings of the change from the physical to the spiritual interpretation of nature are heard in the poem *Nutting*, where the poet describes the circumstances under which a change came in his approach to nature. The poet was returning home in the early dawn from a night spent in revelry and mirth. In that Bechanial mood he started throwing stones disturbing the serenity and peace of the lovely leaves of the tree. Suddenly an idea flashed through his mind that he was unnecessarily hurting nature and unduly molesting the spirit of the tree. At once the poet stopped the hurling of stones and fell in a mood of rumination, feeling subtly and imperceptibly the soul of nature hurt by his fiendish delight. Something mysterious touched him and from henceforward started the period of spiritualistic interpretation of nature. The poet began to consider himself as a 'dedicated spirit and the great mission of his life now became to preach the gospel and secret message of nature to humanity torn asunder by ravages and carnage of the French Revolution.

Fourth stage—the period of the soul

Wordsworth begins to find in the objects of nature a soul and a living spirit, and in the later period of his life his physical and sensuous appreciation of nature takes the form of a spiritual and mystical apprehension of the inner spirit of nature. He now starts looking into the objects of nature :

A spirit that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought
And rolls through all things.

The poet now feels the presence of God colouring all the objects of Nature, investing them with a celestial light—"a light that never was on sea or land." He finds Him in the shining of the stars, and he marks Him in the flowering of the fields. This immanence of God in Nature gives him mystic visions. He finds nature as the physical expression of divine being. He fervently believes that underlying the external forms and shapes of nature there is a soul, a living principle, that gives the spiritual tone of the visions of nature :

In all things, in all natures, in the stars
This active principle abides, from link to link
It circulates the soul of all the worlds.

The belief of the poet that the divine soul permeates through all the objects of nature finds vigorous expression in *Tintern Abbey* where he says :

I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy

Of elevated thoughts : a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused
Whose dwelling is the light of the setting sun
And the round ocean and the living air
And the blue sky, and the mind of man ;
A motion and a spirit that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things.

The whole of the universe thus becomes for the poet permeated by one life, one soul irradiating the thousand manifestations of nature. The spirit of God is there in the hills and the light of the setting sun and wherever the poet may go he has vision of the divine spirit in the objects of nature.

Wordsworth endows each and every object of nature with life. He forestalls the modern biological researches that there is a soul and living principle in all the forms and shapes of nature's myriad objects. The poet says :

To every natural form, rock, fruit or flower,
Even the loose stones that cover the high way
I gave a moral life : I saw them feel.

Quite confidently the poet reiterates his faith in the presence of life in the objects of nature in the poem *The Soul of All the Worlds* :

To every form of being is assigned
An active principle; it lives.

It is because that every object of nature has life that it can feel pain or pleasure like ordinary human-beings when pricked or tickled. This faith of the poet is echoed in the oft-quoted couplet :

And it is my faith
That every flower enjoys the air it breathes.

The affinity between Man and Nature

It is the realisation of the spirit of God permeating the objects of nature as well as human-beings made of flesh and blood that enables Wordsworth to bring Man and Nature closer to each other. The poet believes that the same divine spirit governs and pulsates though human-beings and nature holds out the possibility of a thorough going communion between man and nature. In fact, Wordsworth seeks to establish a harmony between man and nature through his nature poems. He is seldom content to draw beautiful scenes of nature for their own sake. He unites nature with man. He looks on nature to hear "the still sad music of humanity" and his portrayal of man seen against a background of nature gives rise to some of his best known poems such as *The Solitary Reaper*, *Resolu-*

tion and Independence and *Michael.* This point has been beautifully emphasised by Compton-Rickett in the following words :

"In Nature, the poet is concerned far less with the sensuous manifestations that delight most of our Nature poets, than with the spiritual that he finds underlying these manifestations. The primrose and the daffodil are symbols to him of nature's message to man; the grandeur of the mountain torrent appeals to him because he can link its beauty in his mind with the glory of the floating clouds, with the charm of a young girl's face ; a sunrise for Wordsworth is not a pageant of colour, it is a moment of spiritual consecration."

Wordsworth believes that man can get lessons from Nature for his edification if he brings with him 'a heart that watches and receives' and leaves behind his 'meddling intellect that murders to dissect ' Nature can be a perfect educator of man and in his *Lucy Poems* the poet represents the education of nature. "To Wordsworth, Nature appeals as formative influence superior to any other, the educator of senses and mind alike, the sower in our hearts of the deep laid seeds of our feelings and belief. It speaks to the child in the fleeting emotions of its early years and stirs the young poet to an ecstasy, the glow of which illuminates all his work and the rest of his life." What nature can do for man is represented by the poet in *Education of Nature* and in *Tintern Abbey.* In the latter poem Wordsworth emphasizes the educative power of nature and says :

She (nature) can so inform
The mind that it is within us, so impress
With quietness and beauty
That neither evil tongues
Rash judgments nor the sneers of selfish men
Shall ever prevail against us.

Element of Joy in Nature

Wordsworth finds *joy* in Nature. The feeling of pessimism does not oppress the heart of the poet when he is in the presence of the beautiful and joyful aspects of nature. The personal dealing with nature in all her moods 'produces a joy, a plenteousness of delight and all readers of Wordsworth's nature poems feel that sense of exultation and joy which the poet himself had experienced in his life. In the words of W. H Hudson, "Wordsworth finds a never failing principle of joy." The hare runs races in her mirth, the flowers enjoy the air they breathe and the waves dance beside the daffodils :

The Moon doth with delight
Look round her when the heavens are bare.
Waters on a starry night
Are beautiful and fair.

The heart of the poet leaps up with delight when he beholds the rainbow in the sky. The least motion that the linnets make gives a thrill of pleasure, and when he recalls the daffodils "his heart with pleasure fills and dances with the daffodils."

Presentation of peaceful aspects of Nature

It is one of the peculiar features of W--dsworth's nature poetry that all the attention of the poet is directed to the representation of calm and tranquil sights and scenes of nature. He never presents nature 'red in tooth and claw'. Aldous Huxley in his essay *Wordsworth in the Tropics* draws our attention to th s fact that "Wordsworth's conception of nature is onesided. He deals only with the trim and well-dressed nature as it is in the Lake Districts, but he has not one word to say about the malevolent aspect of nature—nature 'red in tooth and claw'. Wordsworth rarely presents nature in its tumultuous and roaring aspects. As he himself was a peace loving soul, so his conception of nature is essentially placid, calm, serene and untroubled by painful thoughts. "Byron being Byron saw nature in the tumult of revolt," says W. H. Hudson, "Wordsworth found in nature what he sought, the peace that was in his soul." Wordsworth's healing balm to festered sores of humanity rises out of this tranquil and peaceful representation of nature's objects. We are deeply impressed and influenced by his clam and tranquil representations bringing before us :

The silence that is in the starry sky
The sleep that is among the lonely hill.

Graphic descriptions

Wordsworth's representations of nature's mystical and spiritual aspects are quite graphic, vivid and colourful. He can give delicate and subtle expression to the "sheer sensuous delight of the world of Nature." He can feel elemental joy of spring :

It was an April morning, fresh and clear,
The rivulet, delighting in its strength
Ran with a young man's speed.

He can actualise with the clarity all the fine charms and graces of a summer day :

The northern dawns
In clearest air ascending showed far off
A surface dappled over with shadows fleecy
From brooding clouds.

He can throw the very spirit of June into a couplet :

Flaunting summer when he throws
His soul into the briar rose.

Wordsworth—the poet of the ear

In the presentation of Nature Wordsworth is fascinated by the *sound* in the objects of nature, just as Shelley was fascinated by the *colour* in the spactacles of nature. This point has been hinted nicely by Compton-Rickett when he points out, "Wordsworth is the poet of the ear just as Shelley is the poet of the eye, and never more felicitous than in conveying some phase of silence, tone of sound." The following lines exhibit the poet's enthusiasm for sound in Nature :

A voice so thrilling never was heard
In spring time from the cuckoo-bird
Breaking the silence of the seas
Among the farthest Hebrides.

A great worshipper of Nature

Throughout his life Wordsworth remained a true interpreter of nature to humanity. "Nature not only gave him the matter," says Matthew Arnold, "but wrote his poems for him." He became the worshipper of nature, her true priest and a revealer of her harmonies to humanity. His essential attitude towards nature remained that of a devout worshipper prostrating before the sights and scenes of nature in the spirit of supplication, reverence and worship. He considered Nature as the external garb of God :

Wisdom and spirit of the universe
The soul that art the Eternity of thought
That givest to forms and images a breath
And ever lasting motion.

He ramained to the last, as he says in *Tintern Abbey* :

A lover of the meadows and the woods
And mountains, of all the mighty world of the eye and ear
Well pleased to recognize in nature and language of the sense
The anchor of my purest thoughts
The nurse, the guide, the guardian of my heart and soul
And of all my moral being.

———

Q. 2 "Wordsworth was as much, if not more, the poet of Man as of Nature, and the poetry of Man tookin his hands as great a development as the poetry of Nature."—(Stopford A. Brooke). Discuss.

Or

Write an essay on Wordsworth's attitude towards human life with particular reference to his portrayal of child and rustic life.

Ans. **The treatment of Man in the 18th Century Classical Poetry**

The poetry of the eighteenth centry in its high ideal of reviving the classical austerity of the Greeks paid little attention to the primary feelings and affections of the human heart. Though Alexander Pope, the prince of Classicism, had written *Essay on Man* professing in it "that the proper study of mankind is man," yet he did not deal with human-beings living in huts and cottages in close proximity to nature ; nor did he derive inspiration from the simple and unsophisticated lives of toilers in the fields and agriculturists ploughing their furrows in the bright light of the sun. The presentation of humanity in classical poetry, on the whole, is artificial, away from the heart of man, concentrating all its attention on fops and gallants spending all their time in convival meetings, fashionable parties and light hearted gaiety. Human beings idealised by the classical poets are not cottagers and shepherds, men of virtue and simplicity, but gay lords and fluttering butterflies of fashion decked in the glittering glory of a life of revelry, mirth and wanton wiles.

Wordsworth considered that Man is a fit subject for poetic composition, and he felt that if a poet did not leave behind a proud record of creative work dealing with human life, he was not worthy to be ranked among the immortal figures of l te . ture. Hence he turned to Man for his poetic inspiration and by the time he rounded off his poetic career he left behind quite a good number of poems dealing with human life.

Wordsworth was primarily the poet of Nature

Wordsworth was essentially the poet of Nature and his vision of human life was concerned by his appreciation of nature. It was "the love of nature that led him to the love of man." Wordsworth found some meaning in human life, if human beings lived in close proximity to nature and allowed its benign influence to sink into their souls. His emphasis was on simplicity and intimate contact with nature. He thought that moral elevation and spiritual edification of man was possible not in the humdrum life of towns and cities in the midst of nerve breaking sounds and corroding anxieties, but by passing one's time in places where the beauty of nature held out the cosmic view of the universe, and proffered solace and enlightenment to the soul. Man could realise his essential humanity and his spiritual elevation by leading a life of primal simplicity in constant communion with nature, for there could not be a better teacher for man in his life than the sublime and noble spectacles of nature bedecked with the glory of that divine power that permeated through all the objects of nature.

Divorced from nature man was a poor creature and the farther he travelled from nature, the more degraded he became. This was the burden of Wordsworth's famous sonnet 'The World Is

Too Much With Us', wherein he bemoaned man's apathy towards the objects of nature because of his pre-occupation with sordid and material pursuits of life. Wordsworth confidently averred that man could enjoy peace and joy when he lived in harmony with nature and considered nature as his friend and teacher, and not as a hostile force to be governed and subdued. Wordsworth stated that if human beings sought happiness in life they should allow the operation of the spirit of republicanism, of Equality, Liberty and Fraternity in their lives as it prevailed in Nature and governed the life of the different objects of nature.

"He had been led by the love of nature to the love of the simple men among whom he lived. Passing into the world and mingling with men, he carried with him the teaching of Nature and applied it to his conception of mankind."

The treatment of the lives of cottagers and rustics

It was quite natural for Wordsworth to deal with the lives of cottagers and rustics who lived in close proximity to Nature in their country surroundings, than with politicians and statesmen stupefied with victory and intoxicated with glory and power. Wordsworth refused to glorify the lives of kings and princes and men belonging to higher strata of society because he found in their lives an artificiality that he despised and a lack of appreciation for the beauties of nature that he loved. He chose rustic life for poetic-treatment for in that condition of life, "the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restraint and speak a plainer and more emphatic language." In order to present rustic life in his poetry, Wordsworth freely moved among peasants and gathered his knowledge of peasant ways and of the peasant character by watchful investigation. But it should be unhesitatingly admitted that the poet threw over peasant life a halo of glory which it did not possess. He *idealised* peasant life and made his peasant heroes more than they were worth in actual life. Ignoring the coarseness and pettiness of this life of rusticity, he fixed his gaze upon the qualities of strength, endurance, unaffected simplicity, courage and hope. He winnowed away the baser elements of rustic life, until he found the pure gold. "He watches men and women with the expectant gaze of a man who is looking for some particular attitude or posture which he is anxious to portray. No doubt by this method he missed a great deal of rich human material, but he is a moralist at heart with one steady purpose in view, and leaving aside much that way fascinating and perplexing, he contents himself with a few broad, simple issues, and there, at his best, he exhibits a massive splendour of compelling power."

Rustic life—a source of moral teachings :

Wordsworth emphasised the moral side of his rustic heroes, and from them he derived lessons of morality and wisdom for his

own life. He gave to his heroes a moral dignity, and a tone of sublimity which they hardly possessed in actual life. He made them moral monitors of human life. In *Resolution and Independence* Wordsworth presented in the simple leach gatherer a hero of resolution and independence, who inspired the poet with his noble idealism and dragged him out of the morass of pessimism and despair in which he had been engulfed. The Cumberland Beggar and the famer of Tilbury Vale, Margaret and Michael—the peasant heroes of Wordsworth—were all inspired by higher and nobler ideals of life, and they proved to be beacon lights of hope for erring humanity. Referring to this point Wordsworth wrote to Lady Beaumont. "There is scarcely one of my poem which does not aim to direct the attention to some moral sentiments or to some general principle or law of thought."

Sympathetic treatment of rustic characters

Wordsworth treated his rustic characters with utmost sympathy and dignity. He could never think of satirising them for their feeble foibles or pick holes in their seemingly affected morality. He was all out for elevating and ennoblising them, and that is why his presentation of rustic characters is marked with a genuine note of sympathy and admiration. "He draws our attention to the pathetic figure of the aged Cumberland beggar and enlists our sympathy for the old leach gatherer; placing each of these simple figures in a noble background of landscape and cloudscape until they are dignified by the spacious beauty of the earth." He was the first English poet "who threw around the lives of ordinary men the glory and sweetness of a song. He was the first who poured around the dalesmen's cottages and the wandering life of the pedlar, and the unheard struggles of the country and the mountain folk, the consecration and tha poet's dream. He was the first who isolated after life in tender and homely narrative. and made us feel that God was with the simple men and women; that in their lives were profound lessons; that the same equal heart beat in the palace and the hamlet hidden in the hills; that all men were brothers in the charities which sooth and bless, in the feelings which nature awakens in their hearts; that a spirit of independence and stern liberty is the birth right and the passion of the poorest shepherd as well as of the patriots who fill the pages of history."

Though his rustic characters, *individual though they may appear*, Wordsworth portrayed the qualities that were commonly to be shared by all human beings. He made his rustic characters the mouthpiece of humanity They stood for certain types rather than for narrow individual qualities of heart and head owned by them. This point has been beautifully stated by Compton Rickett in the following words: "Just as in Nature he (Wordsworth) is always eager to pass from the concrete to the abstract so in dealing with humanity he is *less concerned with individuals than with certain*

qualities common to mankind." Wordsworth did not dwell "on accidents of temperament and disposition that go to differentiate men and women from each other, but on those primal qualities of humanity where Man and Nature touch and blend."

He clearly touched this aspect of his treatment of human character when he stated in the *Prelude* :

My theme (is)
No other, than the every heart of Man.

In *Michael* he tells us how he was led on to think :

On man the heart of man humble life.

and how he loved man as man and

To the mean and the obscure
And all the homely in their holy words
Transferred a courtesy, which had no air of condescension.

Presentation of the noble aspects of human life

Wordsworth concentrated his attention *only on the good aspects of human life.* He did not emphasise the evil aspects of life. "Wordsworth admits the presence of evil in the world", says Oliver Elton, "but is unwilling to admit it as a principle in things because he is a pantheist, to whom all things are portions of the divine." In his most representative poem *Michael* he stressed the filial piety and affection of the old shepherd for his son Luke, but he left unadorned the tale of the evil ways on which Luke had fallen at the end.

Note of tranquillity in the presentation of human life

Wordsworth paid no heed to the tumultuous and fiery aspects of human life. As his own life was marked with a note of tranquillity, placidity and peace, so he supplied in the presentation of human life, the peace and tranquillity that swayed his mind. In *Heart Leap Well* the poet stated :

The heart moving accident is not my trade,
To freeze the blood, I have no ready art ;

and the same note he struck in *Peter Bell* :

The dragon's wings the magic ring,
I shall not cover for my dower.

In his classical poem *Laodamia*, he concentrated not on the tumult and turbulence of passion but on the control that a good wife ought to exercise on her emotional exuberance. The message in *Laodamia* is :

Control rebellious passions, for the gods approve,
The depth and not the tumult of the soul.

Wordsworth believed that human life was worth living inspite of the sorrows and the sufferings that may come to assail it from time to time. Suffering was, in fact, a means to an ethical end. "The 'still sad music of humanity" is neither harsh nor grating, and has ample power to chasten and subdue." Man can lift above the suffering by calling to his help the strength of his moral life and the resources of divine Providence.

Wordsworth emphasised that all human beings were entitled to live and lead a good life. He was opposed to the theory that promoted the extermination of the weak. Survival of the fittest was not the principle of Wordsworth s life. He was a devout believer in equal rights for the weak and the strong, the healthy and the crippled human beings. The Cumberland beggar brought home to Wordsworth's mind that the meanest individual was not useless. He said :

> *'Tis Nature's law*
> *That none the meanest of created things,*
> *Of forms created the most vile and brute,*
> *The dullest or more noxious, should exist*
> *Diverced from good—a spirit and pulse of good* ;
> *A life end soul, to every mode of being*
> *Inseparably linked.*

Wordsworth's ideal of human life is set forth by him in his *Ode to Duty* and *Character of a Happy Warrior*. In these two poems he placed noble ideals of good moral life for the imitation and cultivation of human beings. To him a life of goodness lay in performing one's duty in the spirit of devotion and love. If one followed the path of duty he was bound to get happiness and joy in his life :

> *Serene will be our days and bright,*
> *And happy will our nature be,*
> *When love is an unerring light,*
> *And joy its own security.*

Wordsworth's Treatment of Child Life

Blake and Wordsworth were the two great poets of child life during the age of Romanticism, and both of them focussed their attention not on the seemingly innocent, external appearance of the child, but on some mystical and philosophical strains in his carefree existence Wordsworth was himself an extra-ordinary child endowed with sensibilities and feelings above the common run of children. Naturally he gave an idealised picture of child life in the 'Prelude' and the famous ode on the 'Intimations of Immortality Recollected from Childhood'. The study of the 'Prelude' reveals of interests of Wordsworth as a child and shows that the preoccupation of a child in his non-age is to move about seeking for joy wherever he can find it. According to the poet it is in the period

of childhood that we find a 'splendour in the grass, a glory in the flower'. The remembrances of the days of childhood can provide solace and consolation at a later stage in human life. The memories of child life ought to be recollected, and the poet gives reasons for cherishing these recollections :

There are in our existence spots of time
Which with distinct pre-eminence retain
A renovating virtue, whence our mind
Are nourished and invisibly required. (*Prelude*, Book *XII*).

The poet truthfully records the impressions of childhood when he says :

In November days
When vapours, rolling down the valleys made
A lonely scene more lonesome.
Beneath the gloomy hills I homeward went
In soli ude.

There are many poems of Wordsworth which reveal the glory of childhood and the visionary powers of those happy days gone by.' The 'Cuckoo' is a nice poem and is loved by the poet because it enables him to establish a link with his childhood. The poet listens to the song of the cuckoo :

Till I do beget
That golden time again.

The poet describes the happy life of young boys all lost in joy. Here is a nice picture :

Beneath a rock upon the grass
Two boys are sitting in the sun.
Boys that have had no work to do
Or work that now is done.

To the poet a child of six is a happy vision and he describes his joy in having a look at his pigmy figure :

O blessed vision ! happy child !
That art so exquisitely wild,
I think of thee with many fears
For what may be thy lot in future years.

From the child the poet learns more than he could teach the child :

O dearest, dearest boy ! my heart
For better lore would seldom yearn,
Could I but teach the hundredth part
Of what from thee I learn.

Wordsworth's philosophic attitude towards child life is best presented in the 'Immortality Ode'. Here he does not present the child as *mewling and puking in the nurse's arm*

but as a

Mighty prophet, seer blest
On whom those truths do rest
Which we are toiling all our lives to find.

The poet finds the child nearer to heaven possessing the knowledge of his pre-natal existence :

But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, is our home :
Heaven lies about us in our infancy.

He has direct access to that divine light which is hidden from our view :

Thou Eye among the blind
That, deaf and silent, readest the eternal deep
Haunted for ever by the eternal mind.

Such is the idealised picture of child life presented by the poet in the *Ode to the Intimations of Immortality Recollected from Childhood.*

Criticism of Wordsworth's treatment of child life

Wordsworth's treatment of child life in its mystical and philosophical aspect has been the subject of much dispute and controversy. It is said that in calling the child as 'Mighty prophet' and 'seer blest' Wordsworth was heightening the tone of child life without any justification. The criticism is sound. The poet has idealised the picture of child life from his own experience as a child. But the Ode is undoubtedly a glorious tribute to the child, and ranks very high among child-poems in English literature. "The mystic conception of man is seen more clearly in *Intimatians of Immortality*, which Emerson calls 'the high-water mark of poetry in the nineteenth century.' In this last splendid Ode Wordsworth adds to his spiritual interpretation of nature and man the alluring doctrine of pre-existence, which has appealed so powerfully to Hindu and Greek in turn, and which makes of human life a continuous, immortal thing, without end or beginning.

Q. 3. Critically examine Wordsworth's theory of poetic diction. How far is it correct to say that "There neither is nor can be any essential distinction between the language of prose and metrical composition ?"

Ans. Wordsworth's reaction against the 18th Century poetic diction

Every genius is a rebel and so was William Wordsworth. He protested against the traditions and usages set up by the poets of the pseudo-classical school during the eighteenth century. In 1798 he came forward with a new theory of man, a new theory of nature, and a new theory of poetry. He put forward his theory of poetic diction in the 'Preface to the Lyrical Ballads', and his views about the language that was to be employed in poetry raised a storm of protest against him even by such a close associate as Coleridge. In fact, Wordsworth in expounding his theory of poetic diction did nothing wrong. He simply emphasized the use of a simpler language well within the reach of cottagers and shepherds about whom he was composing his poems. Poetry was now coming out of the narrow groves of town life and was embracing the life, nature and humanity in its simplest and most unsophisticated forms. Wordsworth rightly felt that for the new poetry of the new age, a language was needed, and what he earnestly felt, he expressed in the 'Preface to the Lyrical Ballads'. His entire effort in renovating the language of poetry was guided by the feeling that "all conventions of pedantry must be discarded in order to evolve the true poetic style, which should not only be simple and unaffected but should possess the power and truth of feeling." With these ideas in his mind Wordsworth formulated his theory of poetic diction in his 'Preface to the Lyrical Ballads.'

Wordsworth's theory of poetic diction

In the first edition he stated that the poems in the book were "an experiment to ascertain how far the language of conversation in the middle and lower classes is adapted to the purposes of poetic pleasure." In the second 'Preface to the 'Lyrical Ballads' the poet enunciated his theory of poetic diction in a more comprehensive and categorical form. He stated, "The principal object proposed io these poems was to choose incidents and situations from common life, and to relate or describe them throughout, as far as this was possible "in a selection of language really used by men" and, at the same time, "to throw over them a certain colouring of the imagination", whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual aspects ; and further and above all to make these incidents and situations interesting by tracing in them, truly though not ostentatiously, the primary laws of our nature, chiefly, as far as regarding the manner in which we associate ideas in state of excitement. The language, too, of these men has been adopted because such men honourly communicate with the best objects from which the best part of language is originally derived." In addition to the comprehensive statement Wordsworth proceeded to a wider generalisation stating that, "It may be safely affirmed that there neither is nor an be, any "essential" difference between the langu-

age of prose and metrical composition. He also endorsed his first statement that "the real language of men" was the right material. It was to be purified from provincialism, and from "all rational causes of disgust and dislike." It was to be "selected"; it was to be "the real language of men in a state of vivid sensation."

Three main principles of Wordsworth's poetic diction :

When we examine Wordsworth's statement regarding poetic diction, the following facts clearly catch our attention—(i) The language of poetry should be the language "really used by man", but it should be a "selection" of such language. All the words used by the people cannot be employed in poetry. Only selected and chosen words which are used in common parlance can serve the purpose of poetry. (ii) It should be the language of men in a state of vivid sensation. It means that language used by people in a state of animation can form the language of poetry. It should have a certain colouring of imagination. The poet should give the colour of his imagination to the language employed by him in poetic composition. (iii) There is no "essential" difference between the words used in prose and in metrical composition. Words of prose and poetry are not clearly demarcated, so that words which can be used in prose can find place in poetry and vice-versa. "What Wordsworth means is that the words in conversation, if they are properly selected, would provide the rough frame work of the language of poetry, only the latter is heightened by feeling and emotion." Through the power of imagination, the poet can select words fit for poetic composition. When the poet is truly inspired, his imagination will enable him to select from the "language really used by men" the real and true style of poetry.

Wordsworth's practice of his theory of poetic diction :

There are four basic principles of Wordsworth's theory of poetic diction. Wordsworth followed the main tenets of his theory in some of his poems, but it became pretty difficult for him to stick strictly to his theory when he came to the composition of such splendid poems as *Tintern Abbey*, *Ode on the Intimations of Immortality Recollected from Childhood*, *Laodamia*, *Ode to Duty* etc. Where Wordsworth closely adhered to his theory, he introduced simplicity, ease and something of banality. Whereas in those poems of magnificence and dignity where he left the theory to its fate, he could certainly scale heights of poetic grandeur and sublimity which could not have been possible if he had tenaciously clung to his theory that there is no essential difference between the language of prose and poetry. It is with reference to this point that Raleigh has made the significant remark, "It has been argued, that when he writes, he breaks his own rules, and when writes ill, it has been implied, he keeps them. But the fact is he hardly ever observes his own rules, and the poems in which he most nearly observes them are often among his best."

The elements of simplicity and ease that we come across in his poetry are principally due to his adoption of a language well within the reach of common people. The following lines reveal his use of ordinary words leading to simplicity :

The cattle are grazing
Their heads never raising
They are forty feeding like one.

The following stanza *The Thorn* is moving in its simplicity, and the virtue that underlies it is due to its simple diction :

At all times of the day and night
This wretched woman thither goes,
And she is known to every star
And every wind that blows,
And when the whirl wind's on the hill,
Or frosty air is keen and still,
And to herself she cries,
Oh misery ! Oh misery
Oh woe is me ! Oh misery !

But often his simplicity bordered on the line of ugliness and banality when he carried his theory to its farthest stretching point as in the following lines from *Simon Lee* :

Few months of life has in store,
As he to you will tell,
For still, the more he works, the more
His poor old ankles swell
My gentle reader, I perceive
How, patiently you have waited,
And I'm afraid that you expect
Some tale will be related.

Sometimes the use of simple poetic diction brought the charge of "low and maudline imbecility" particularly when Wordsworth wrote stanzas in the *Idiot Boy*. The following lines appear silly and imbecile :

And Betty's most especial charge
Was Johnny ! Johnny ! mind that you
Come home again, nor stop at all,
Come home again, what'er befall
My Johnny, do, I pray you do.

But Wordsworth realising that some critics and readers might find his poems dull and ridiculous because of his employment of the new poetic diction made the apologetic confession: "In some instances, feelings, even of the ludicrous may have given to my readers by expressions which appeared to me tender and pathetic."

Wordsworth's deviation from his theory of poetic diction

It is not that Wordsworth always adhered to his theory of writing in a language within the comprehension of those who used simple prose. In some poems as in *Tintern Abbey*, *Laodamia* and *Immortality Ode*, his diction became chaste, poetic, sublime and dignified. One could not say after reading the following lines from *Tintern Abbey* that Wordsworth had propounded a theory of poetic diction insisting that there is no essential difference between the language of prose and poetry. Read the lines carefully notice the dignity, sublimity and philosophic intensity of the poet's diction :

That serene and blessed mood
In which the affections gentle lead us on,
Until the breath of this corporeal frame,
And even the motion of our human blood
Almost suspended. we are laid asleep
In body, and became a living soul ;
While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy
We see into the life of things.

Or

The lines from the *Immortality Ode*

Thou little Child, yet glorious in the might
Of heaven born freedom on thy being's height,
Why with such earnest pains dost though provoke,
The years to bring the inevitable yoke,
Thus blindly with thy blessedness a strife ?
Full soon the soul shall have her earthly freight
And custom lie upon thee with a weight
Heavy as frost, and deep almost as life.

Criticism of Wordsworth's theory and its final appraisal

Wardsworth's theory of poetic diction was disapproved by Coleridge, and in the pages of *Biographia Literaria* he found numerous defects in Wordsworth's theory of poetic diction. Coleridge stated that language purged from local and class peculiarities was not different from any other language. Fourther the use of meter in poetry necessitated the use of a language different from the ordinary language of poetry. Still more, the heightened and emotionally worked up state of the poet in poems of philosophic import as the *Ode on the Intimations of Immortality Recollected from Childhood* certainly needed a language coloured by emotional fervour and vigorous imagination. For the expression of deep emotions and sublime thoughts such as in *Tintern Abbey*, a language of prose was most unsuited. Only the language that Wordsworth has used in the poems is the fitting vesture for thoughts of a nature embodied in *Tintern Abbey*. Hence Wordsworth was mistaken in making a sweeping generalisation for all

types of poetic thoughts to be rendered in the language of common speech. Wordsworth's chief error was to extend his theories to include all poetry. No theory, however subtly argued and cogently phrased, can be comprehensive enough to hold good for poetry in general. Again Wordsworth's deductions from the limited scope of his doctrines were rather extravagant." Herbert Read makes a similar observation when he says, "It is equally true that there are as many poems which contradict the theory as an all inclusive generalisation. The mistake is to imagine that any theory of poetry, which descends to accidentals of diction and metre can be universal in its scope."

Whatever may be the shortcomings of Wordsworth's theory of poetic diction, it cannot be denied that he rendered remarkable service to poetry by effectively putting an end to the use of "false poetic diction, the worst of all the diseases which have afflicted English poetry." To address the sun as 'rosy Phoebus' and to call fish the 'finny prey' was really unpoetic. Wordsworth at least relieved poetry of an artificial and unnatural diction through which it had lived its unnatural life of hot-houses for over a hundred years Wordsworth might be wrong on particular points, but he certainly did much to bring the language of poetry to its natural beauty and simplicity. He broke down a vicious tradition and re-asserted the claims of simplicity and truth. "It cannot be denied" says Wyatt, "that he (Wordsworth) did poetry a valuable service; he took stock of the language of poetry, cleared out a lot of old rubbish which had long ceased to have any but a conventional poetic value, and made available for poetic use many words that had long been falsely regarded as unpoetic."

Q. 4. Critically examine Wordsworth's Theory of Poetry.

Ans.—In the Preface to the second edition of the 'Lyrical Ballads' (1800) Wordsworth set out his theory of poetry. We find a sustained exposition of Wordsworth's general theory of poetry as well as his opinions about—(a) the subject, (b) the style of poetry in the pages of the Preface. The entire poetic theory of Wordsworth centres round the examination of the origin, nature, and purpose of poetry, together with a probe into the subject matter and style of poetry.

Wordsworth's theory of poetry

Wordsworth begins by saying that "all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings", and goes on to say, "though this be true, poems to which any value can be attached were never produced on any variety of subject but by a man who, being possessed of more than usual organic sensibility, has also "thought long and deeply."

An examination of the above two statements brings out certain points for our consideration. First, poetry is spontaneous and it cannot be made to order. Poetry cannot be composed under dur ess nor can the poet be forced to write at the spur of an opportune moment. Poetry is a matter of feeling and mood. When the poetic mood is on the poet, he sings out songs of rapture or sorrow spontaneously from the core of his heart. In a poetic mood poetry flows out naturally from the poet's heart. His language of discourse in such moments becomes the language of poetical inspiration. In short, Wordsworth emphasises the basic fact of poetic creation when he states that poetry is the "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings." "The clear springs of poetry must flow freely and spontaneously—it cannot be made to flow through artificially laid pipes." From this observation follows the next that poetry is essentially a matter of "expressing powerful feelings" felt in the heart and not generated in the mind. Poetry takes its birth in the springs of the heart and not in the cold store of the intellect. Poetry is connected with feelings. All of us feel but the poet feels intensely and deeply than most people, and that is why he is able to express his feelings more touchingly in a poetic language than most people can do. The poet's heart leaps up when he beholds a rainbow, a red rose, a white dove, and a pure lily. He is stirred to emotion at the sight of beautiful things and the heightened emotional state of the poet finds expression through his verses. Thus according to Wordsworth deep emotion is the fundamental condition of poetry. Without emotion and powerful feelings poetry cannot be written. The third conclusion that follows from Wordsworth's later observation is that "sensibility alone is not sufficient to ensure good poetry; it must be directed by a calm mind." Wordsworth arrives at the conclusion, "Poetry is produced by a man, who being possessed of more than organic sensibility, had also thought long and deeply."

Poetry is emotion recollected in tranquillity

From the statement,"...had also thought long and deeply", rises the second contention of Wordsworth that "poetry takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity." Wordsworth explains the role of calm thinking and deliberate contemplation in the composition of poetry later on in the preface when he says. "The emotion is contemplated till, by a species of reaction, the tranquillity gradually disappears, and an emotion kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind. In this mood successful composition generally begins, and in a mood similar to this it is carried on." The process of poetic composition is not an easy one, As expressed in the above statement, poetic composition has to pass through four stages: recollection contemplation, recrudescene and composition. All that Wordsworth seeks to emphasise in the theory that 'poetry is emotion recollected in tranquillity' is to

quote the words of Herbert Read, "that good poetry is never an immediate reaction to the provoking cause; that our sensations must be allowed time to sink back into the common fund of our experience, there to find their level and due proportion. That level is found for them by the mind in the act of contemplation, and then in the process of contemplation the sensations revive, and out of the union of contemplating mind and the receiving sensibility, rises that unique mood of expression which we call poetry."

Wordsworth's practice of his theory of poetry

Wordsworth actually followed the above process of poetic composition He allowed the emotions to sink and revived them at a later stage in a state of tranquillity, and composed his finest works in that recollected state of tranquillity, *The Prelude*, *The Daffodils*, *Tintern Abbey*, *Resolution and Independence*, *Solitary Reaper* etc. were composed according to emotions recollected in tranquillity. "He indulged his memory with long periods of reverie, set it to travel to and fro among the past experiences of his life, and loved solitude and indolence chiefly because during the lulls of social intercourse and intellectual labour lost impressions were recaptured. He loved to sit in the "long barren silence" contemplating the submerged feelings and images in his mind taking hold of them when they rose to the surface. His own, function, as it seemed to him, was simply that of a still and patient chronicler"

Nor it is I who play the part,
But a shy spirit in my heart,
That comes and goes......will sometimes leap,
From hiding places ten years deep ;
Or haunts me with familiar face ;
Returning like a host unlaid,
Until the debt I owe be paid.

Wordsworth could follow his theory of poetic composition, but to say that all poetry is written in a state of calm and tranquil recollection is not true. If that it is accepted, the scope of lyric poetry will be very much limited, and poetry will not be written at the white heat of emotional excitement. Hence to compose poetry in the style referred to by Wordsworth one needs a fine memory that can faithfully recollect the past and a contemplative mind fit to cogitate and recreate what had been experienced at an early stage. Wordsworth, could succeed in his aim for he had been endowed by nature with a prodigious memory and a contemplative mind. "For Wordsworth", to quote Mair, "life was a series of impressions, and the poet's duty was to recapture those impressions, *to isolate them and brood over them*, till gradually, as a result of his contemplation, emotion stirred again and emotion akin to the authentic thrill that had excited him, when the impres-

sion was first bore in experience." For other poets like Shelley the method of Wordsworth could not be applied. It was applicable to him alone. He alone had the gift of visualising the past with a wonderful vividness, and gloat over them with the fancy of a poet

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude.

Wordsworth's views on the poet and the end of poetry

Wordsworth, next, takes up the frame work of the poet and the end of poetry. According to Wordsworth, to be a poet is a rare privilege and a poet has a noble mission to carry out in his life. A poet is not an ordinary man speaking to man; a man, it is true, endowed with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness, who has a greater knowledge of human nature and a more comprehensive soul than are supposed to be common among mankind. Elucidating Wordsworth's observations about a poet, J. C. Smith remarks in his book *A Study of Wordsworth* : 'The poet then is a man endowed with a 'more than usual' capacity to perceive and feel, and to revive his perceptions and feelings in the presence of their objects. To be a great poet, let us add, he must have thought long and deeply. In all this he differs from his fellow men only in degree : all men are able to perceive, feel and think in some measure, and many are able even to imagine :

Oh ! many are the poets that are sown
By Nature : men endowed with highest gifts;
The vision and the faculty divine :
Yet wanting the accomplishment of verse.

It is this last gift, the accomplishment of verse, that distinguishes the articulate poet from other natures, even from other poetic natures. The poet can communicate his experiences, and communicate them in such a way as to give pleasure."

The function of Poetry

Having pointed out the nature of the 'poet' Wordsworth directs his attention to the end and function of poetry. Poetry is not a mere diversion, nor a dish for epicurean taste. "Poetry" according to Wordsworth, "is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge, the impassioned expression that is in the countenance of all science." Poetry seeks to ennoble and edify. It is like the morning star which throws its radiance through the gloom and darkness of life. The poet is a teacher and through the medium of poetry he imparts moral lessons for the betterment of human life. Poetry is the instrument for the propagation of moral thoughts. Wordsworth's poetry does not simply delight us, but it also teaches us

deep moral lessons and brings home to us deep philosophic truths about life and religion. Wordsworth believes that "a poetry of revolt against moral ideas is a poetry of revolt against life ; a poetry of indifference towards moral ideas is a poetry of revolt against life ; a poetry of indifference towards moral ideas is a poetry of indifference towards life."

The subject matter and the style of poetry

"Apart from these general views on the poet and his art, Wordsworth dogma can be divided into two portions concerning— (a) the subject, and (b) the style of poetry.

(a) Regardings subject, Wordsworth declares his preference for "incidents and situations from common life." To obtain such situations, "humble and rustic life was generally chosen, because in that condition the essential passions of the heart and a better soil in which they can attain their aturity." Over these incidents Wordsworth proposes to throw "A certain colouring of the imagination whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual aspect."

(b) Wordsworth's views on poetical style are the most revolutionary of all the ideas in his Preface. Discarding the "gaudiness and insane phraseology of many modern writers." he insists that his poems contain little Poetic diction, and are written in "a selection of the real language of men in a state o. vivid sensation." His views of poetic diction can be summed up in those words : "there neither is nor can be any essential difference between the language of prose and matrical composition."

Q. 5. Elaborate Wordsworth's remark, "Every great poet is a teacher ; I wish either to be considered as a teacher, or as nothing", with reference to his poetry and emphasize the moral value of Wordsworth's poetry.

Or

Write a note on Wordsworth as a didactic poet with particular emphasis on the moral value of his poetry.

Or

Write a note on Wordsworth as a teacher, and his message to humanity.

Ans. **Didactic Poet**

Wordsworth once said, "Every great poet is a teacher ; I wish either to be considered as a teacher, or as nothing." Not like poets writing simply to please, not like Lucretius or Pope casting other men's thoughts into ingenious or

highly coloured or epigrammatic verse; not like Homer or Shakespeare or Milton standing in impersonal distance from their wonderful creations; not like Shelley beating in the void his luminous wings in vain; not like Keats revelling in his beautiful creations did Wordsworth compose his poetry. He was, first and foremost, a philosophical thinker, a man whose intention and purpose of life was to think out for himself faithfully and seriously the question concerning 'man and nature and human life' and then to bring the healing balm of consolation to those who needed it most in their lives. Wordsworth was not like those poets whose main object in writing poetry was simply to please and provide delight to the lower feelings of the heart.

In a letter to Lady Beaumont, Wordsworth pointed out that the purpose of poetry was "to console the afflicted, to add sunshine to daylight by making the happy happier, to teach the young and the gracious of every age to see, to think, and feel, and therefore to become more octively and securely virtuous."

Wordsworth looked upon the poet not as a pleasure giver, but as a seer who sees more truly and consequently feels more deeply than ordinary men. The poet can see through the heart of things and bring lesson of morality and wisdom for the guidance of humanity.

Not a thorough moralist

It was with these ideas that Wordsworth started his poetic career. But it would be wrong to think that Wordsworth was purely a teacher determined to be a preacher and that he was not an artist enjoying the beauty and joy of poetic composition. Though his aim was primarily to teach, yet he did not make his teaching a thing of moral obsession. He taught not by giving out more precepts and maxims, as a moralist or a theologian does; he taught indirectly by presenting before his readers the picture of the new visions of life grounded in principles of morality and philosophic insight into life. He saw beyond the surface of things and revealed the new vision of life which he perceived exhorfing his readers to be benefited by what he had observed and seen in life. The new vision that he disclosed for the guidance of humanity was not only beautiful and glorious, it was also moral, and once the poetic vision was unfolded by the poet, its spiritual tone and moral feeling came out with as great a vividness and as strong a force as the poetic vision that embodied these moral aspects. Thus it was to the credit of Wordsworth that he taught not directly like moralists and preachers, but indirectly, by first studying the hearts of the readers poetically through the new vision of poetry held out to them in a beautiful manner. In fact, Wordsworth first directed the reader to the beauties of his poetry and then he expected him to inhale the moral vapours that might be emanating from the sweet odour of his poetry. Had Wordsworth taken upon

himself the role of a conscientious and deliberate preacher and teacher, he would have failed as a poet. But Wordsworth has not failed as a poet. He is a great poet in spite of his preaching and teaching and the reason is that the teaching of the poet is not a conscious and deliberate attempt, but an indirect suggestion that emanates from the surface of his poetic thoughts. At places when Wordsworth comes out consciously and deliberately as a teacher, his poetry flags, becomes dull and prosaic ; and where his teaching is merged in his poetry, he thrills and inspires and becomes a true philosophic thinker. If we carefully study Wordsworth's po try, we can derive the following moral lessons that the poet indirectly seeks to impart to his readers.

Nature as a great teacher

The first thing that Wordsworth teaches us is the adoration or worship of nature. It is Wordsworth's great message that nature can be the teacher of humanity and fill his heart with pleasure and delight provided he approaches nature in the spirit of a devotee and worshipper. Nature can be the great consoler to man. In his grief and sorrow he can derive from nature a consolation which cannot be provided to him in the din and bustle of city life. Man must go to Nature with a heart that watches and receives, and in that state of receptivity he can find lessons of morality and wisdom from nature. Thus the first great message and teaching of Wordsworth is his insistance to live the life of Nature and live as close to Nature as possible. It is by living in close proximity to Nature that spiritual elevation and moral sublimity can be brought about in the life of man. The whole poetry of Wordsworth centres round this grand revelation of the mystery of life that lies all round us—in the meadows and hills and rivers, in plants and flowers and birds. This is the truth that Wordsworth discovered for himself—a truth, says Raleigh, "not to be attained by any sort of intellectual elaboration, but by a purging of the eye, an intense and rare simplicity of outlook." From nature man can get lessons of morality and noble life :

One impulse from a vernal wood
May teach you more of man
Of moral evil and of good
Than all the sages can.

Nature can always become the moral teacher of man.

Interest in simple life of Nature

The special aim of Wordsworth as a poet was, in the words of Bailey, "to show that in the commonest sight, in the simplest nature, in the Daffodil, in poor Susan, in a beggar, or in a cloud, there is something of interest, of stimulus, of emotional inspiration, if one will but learn to look for it." It was Wordsworth who roused the interest of his readers in the simple life of Nature

as well as in the simple life of cottagers and poor shepherds. By sympathetically treating the life of cottagers and shepherds, Wordsworth taught the lesson of sympathy for the downtrodden, the crushed, and the suffering human-beings. This message of sympathy for all human beings whatever their station in life may be, is the message that can bring about the regeneration of mankind, Wordsworth as a poet and as a teacher emphasized the necessity of having a sympathetic and humanitarian outlook towards suffering human-beings. He taught that man could reach God by loving his fellow-men. The way of union with the divine-being was the way of service and sympathy for mankind. He recognized that his "very self, his will is identical, in essence, with every creature—even the oppressed, the humblest and the down-trodden. When he has done so, and is in love and sympathy with Man and Nature, that the veil of Maya becomes transparent, and he gets nearer his Maker and ultimately becomes His part." Hence man must develop the feelings of sympathy with the poor, the down-trodden and the miserable persons in our society.

Principle of live and let live

Wordsworth did not believe in the extermination of the weak nor had he faith in the theory that emphasized the survival of the fittest. Wordsworth was the follower of the principle of 'live and let live.' He found that every human—being had his own importance in life, and it was wrong to consider the meanest individual as useless. The Cumberland Beggar taught Wordsworth that the meanest individual is not useless. There is a soul in each one of us and as such the meanest things should exist in their own right, and should not despised for their meanness.

Presence of divine spark in Nature

Wordsworth saw the divine spirit running through the various objects of Nature and he emphasized mystically the unity of all life. The same spark of divinity that governs the life of Nature also governs the life of man. Man could realize his spiritual dignity by cultivating in him spiritual qualities that may bring him nearer to the divine-being. The spiritual dignity of man could be realized by living in harmony with Nature where the divine light of God was seen in its most sublime form.

Message of moral and virtuous life

Wordsworth gave the message of moral and virtuous life. He believed that following the path of Duty and Morality one could rise to high neights of success in his life. It was not the life of debauchery and licentiousness that could bring men to real happiness in his life. Real happiness would lie in leading a life of morality, duty and simplicity. These facts were emphasized by were emphasized by Wordsworth in 'Michael' and 'Ode to Duty.' In 'Michael' Wordsworth admoishes the readers not to follow the evil ways of Luke who had belied all hopes and expectations of poor Michael and brought despair in his life. In the 'Ode to Duty'

the poet lays emphasis on treading on the path of duty, which alone can lead us to happiness and joy. Performance of one's duty leads to the highest happiness and the poet feels :

Serene will be our days and bright
And happy will our nature be
When love is an unerring light
And joy its own security.

when we follow the path of duty.

Wordsworth, the poet of morality, lays stress on the code of duty, the surest guide of life. 'Ode to Duty' is the poetic embodiment of the ideal which he pursued in his own life and which he showed up before the world :

Give unto me, made lowly wise
The spirit of self sacrifice ;
The canfidence of reason give ;
And in the light of truth thy Bondman let me live !

Opposed to gross-materialism

Wordsworth was opposed to gross-materialism and sordid pursuits of life. He wanted human-beings to keep away from the life of sordid materialism, for such a life was neither useful to the individual nor good for the society which pursued it. In the sonnet 'The World Is Too Much With Us', the poet expressed his resentment against the life of materialism. He pointed out that the life of materialism and getting and spending brought about the isolation of man from Nature, and this separation of man from the beauties of Nature was a curse for his own spiritual development. Materialism and worldly engrossments took away man from the path of Nature which alone could bring him consolation and peace to his soul. Hence Wordsworth's message was to keep away as much as possible from the sordidness and gross-materialism of worldly peoole and to lead the life of simplicity, living in close proximity to the beauties of Nature.

Control upon passions

Wordsworth's message to lovers was to love deeply and strongly the soul of the beloved, rather than be led away by physical appetite and painted colours. This insistence of the poet on the control of passions is given by him in 'Laodamia' in the following words :

Be taught, O faithful consort, to control,
Rebellious passion, for the gods approve
The depth, and not the tumult of the soul.

Further he says,

Learn by a mortal yearning to ascend

Towards a highet object-Love was given
Encouraged, sanctioned, chiefly for that end.

A plea for optimism

Wordsworth was an optimist and he invariably gave the message of resolution and independence to persons oppressed by feelings of pessimism and despair. His 'Resolution and Independence' will always serve as a beacon light of hope to those who fall on pessimistic feelings particularly in their approaching old age. To all persons submerged in feelings of despair with the approaching years of life, the message of the Leech-gatherer as given in 'Resolution and Independence', can serve as a message of hope and strength.

Life has its own charms

Wordsworth holds that life in spite of its manifold evils is yet good and worth-living. Suffering and sorrow are virtues through which man can reach higher stations of life. Suffering is a means to an ethical end. "The still sad music of humanity" is neither harsh nor grating, and has "ample power to chasten and subdue." Man can rise above his suffering by calling to his help the strength of his moral life and the resource of Divine Providence.

These are some of the moral aspects of Wordsworth as a teacher, and if we closely listen and follow to that Wordsworth says in his poetry, we can certainly make our life noble and sublime, and leave behind immortal trails on the sands of time. Bot it should always be remembered that at his best he is not a mere preacher. It is the poetry of his philosophical verses that appeals to us and not its philosophy. Perhaps he was a moralist in the French sense of the term. We must further guard ourselves against the fallacy of tracing a scientific system of thought in the poetry of Wordsworth, Matthew Arnold warned us against this long ago. He is not great because his teaching are important or valuable but because they have been presented poetically. And where he fails to present them in a poetic manner, he, we should confess, degenerates into a mere poetaster.

Q. 6. Trace the influence of the French Revolution on the poetry of William Wordsworth.

Ans. Democratic background

The French Revolution that stirred the whole of Europe to its depth left a powerful impression on the Romantic poets of England. Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley and Byron were deeply

influenced by the Revolution and their poetic works were coloured by the ideals and the revolutionary fervour of the revolutionists of France. Wordsworth was the first great romantic poet who came under the influence of the Revolution. The principles of liberty, fraternity and equality upheld by the revolutionists in France were in conformity with the ideals that the poet had espoused and Cherished throughout his life. Wordsworth had lived long in a society which was democratic in its basis. There was a note of equality and fraternity in the lives of the rural people of Cumberland. The ideals that were now proclaimed and practised by the French Revolutionists were thus the ideals in which the poet had been reared and brought up. Even at Cambridge he had lived in this atmosphere of brotherhood :

We were brothers all
In honour as in one community
Scholars and good gentlemen. (The Prelude, Book IX).

Hence the French Revolution gave no new jolt to the mind of poet. It came quite as a natural event, for it was based on those very ideals which had been held in high esteem by the poet. Wordsworth accepted the French Revolution and hailed it with enthusiasm. "The Revolution in its earlier phases, involved no revolution in Wordsworth's mental life" says Raleigh, and rightly too, because the ideals that were dear to Wordsworth were proclaimed a new in France. Wordsworth, therefore, heartily hailed the French Revolution and wrote eulogistically about it in the 'Prelude' :

Bliss was in that dawn to be alive,
But to be young was very heaven

(The Prelude, Book XI.)

The poet felt elated and exhilarated at the thought that the Revolution was making the end of an era of tyranny and was ushering in a period of peace, equality and brotherhood of mankind. For the poet the Revolution brought the promise of a new and glorious era in the life of human beings all over Europe :

Europe at that time was thrilled with joy
France standing on the path af golden hours,
And human nature seeming born again.

First visit to France

The poet was all applause for the Revolution. In that ecstatic mood, he visited France in July, 1790. He noticed a wave of enthusiasm sweeping over the minds and hearts of the people of France. National rejoicings filled the heart of the poet with joy. He was nicely impressed by :

Songs, garlands, mirth
Banners, and happy faces, far and high

In glowing words the Solitary Reaper describes the new hope brought about by the French Revolution in the *Excursion* :

But now
To the wide world's astonishment appeared
A glorious openings, the unlooked-for dawn,
That promised everlasting joy to France.

Second visit to France

In his second visit to France in November 1791, he was deeply moved by the sight of misery and suffering among the French people. His association with Michael Beaupuy, an ardent patriot and enthusiastic supporter of the French Revolution brought him in intimate contact with spots of misery and suffering in France. When Beaupuy enlightened the poet that the Revolutionists were fighting against unjust laws, tyranny, poverty and injustice, the poet was deeply stirred by the crusading zeal of the French people. With Beaupuy he shared his faith in the fundamental humanitarianism of the revolutionary cause :

I with him believed
That a benignant spirit was abroad
Which might not be withstood, that proverty
Abject as this would in a little time
Be found no more, that we should see
Better days to all mankind.

The poet now became interested in alleviating the sorrows and sufferings of Man. He felt in the heart of his heart that a benignant spirit was abroad, and every thing was working for the betterment of humanity. All his youth seemed to have been a preparation for this time which now :

Rushed in as if on wings......
The pulse of being everywhere was felt,
When all the several frames of things, like stars
Through every magnitude distinguishable
Were, half canfaunded in each other's blaze
One galaxy of life and joy.

Wordsworth became an ardent worker in the cause of freedom and he was prepared to ally himself with the Girondins (one of the Revolutionary parties). His heart was now with the French people. He was "all given to the people" and his "love was theirs." Had Wordsworth lived for some days more in France, he would have written songs in praise of the Revolution and might have ended his life as a martyr to freedom. But he was called back to England in 1793.

His disillusionment

On his return to England, his faith in the ideals and achievements of the Revolution remained firm and unshaken. But

then unexpected events happened which shook the faith of the poet. The poet was enraged when England declared war on France in 1793, but his ire was soon turned into sympathy for his countrymen when he heard that the French Revolutionists who had established the reign of equality. liberty and fraternity were entering on a new phase of bloodshed and terror. The horrible carnage, bloodshed and rapine, and the September massacres filled the mind of the poet with feelings of deep revulsion and disgust for the French Revolution and the revolutionists who were now turning the ideals of the Revolution for extinction of innocent humanity in France. When the poet heard of the terrible orgy of blood in France, he was completely shaken, and he felt no joy in his life. His peace was disturbed. He expressed this state of his life in the *Prelude*—

> *I scarcely knew one night of quite sleep*
> *Such ghastly vision had I of despair*
> *And tyranny, and implements of death*
> *And long orations which in dreams I pleaded*
> *Before unjust tribunals.*

Influence of William Godwin

He was now on the brink of disillusionment and when France became a conquering and tyrannical power, all hopes were lost. The poet drew away from the Revolution and sought refuge in the abstract political theories behind the revolutionary movement. He found consolation and solace in the *Political Justice* of Godwin. For sometime he admired and praised the doctrines of Godwin, the father-in-law of the poet Shelley. But "the wilderness of Godwin's thought perplexed and bewildered him. He soon found he was on a wrong path. He turned away from politics and by slow degrees found his way back to poetry. He continued working sometime against his nature :

> *Till, demanding proof,*
> *And seeking it in everything I lost*
> *And feeling of conviction and, in fine,*
> *Sick wearied out with contrarieties*
> *Yielded up moral questtons in despair.*

Return to Nature

Wordsworth now turned from Godwin and his rational philosophy to Nature and to humble dalesmen of Cumberland. Nature gave him some comfort. Simple life of peasants restored to him his lost faith in the goodness of human life. Dorothy and Coleridge helped Wordsworth in the restoration of his normal state. The poet was deeply indebted to his sister for the great service she rendered to him in restoring his shattered faith in the goodness of man. He was deeply obliged to Dorothy and he wrote about her—

Ah ! Then it was
That thou, most precious friend ! about this time
First known to me, didst lend a living help
To regulate my soul......
She in the midst of all, preserved me still
A poet.

Coleridge gave him tremendous faith in himself and brought back to him his adoration of nature and simple human life. It was by slow degree that by the gentle influenee of his sister and Coleridge and "by the natural operation of the daily interests and sights of country life that the outward world re-asserted itself; and the things that he had loved in his childhood came cool, and sweet upon his sense, and he saw his way out to poetry."

Christopher Caudwell gives another explanation of the whole dilemma from the Marxist point of view. The French Revolution was essentially a bourgeoise revolution, and Wordsworth was essentially a bourgeoise artist. The Revolution ended in a reign of terror since the bourgeoise refused to grant the natural rights of the common people. Similarly, Wordsworth was shocked since he was, at his best, a bourgeoise revolutionary. Not able to grant the rights of the common people, the bourgeoise became reactionary ; and so did Wordsworth become a Tory.

2.
Coleridge

Q. 7. Trace the influence of the French Revolution on the poetry of Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

Ans. The first effect of the French Revolution

Coleridge like his friend Wordsworth hailed the French Revolution, for in his view the ideals of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity espoused and upheld by the revolutionaries of France were noble and dignified ideals. The French Revolution seemed to open before the poet a new vision of life. When Bastile was broken open and the prisoners, who had been immured behind the bars, were released to enjoy the sunshine of renewed hope, the heart of Coleridge was elated and he felt the surge of a new life springing before his eyes. He wrote at this time :

Liberty the soul of life, shall reign
Shall throb in every pulse, shall flow thro' every vein.

Coleridge welcomed the event as heralding a time when :

No fetter will the mind shall know
And Eloquence shall fearless flow
Yes ! Liberty the soul of life shall reign
Shall throb in every pulse- shall flow through every vein.

Tyranny is told to go.

Beneath some barbarous sky
Thy terrors lost and ruined power deplore !

The scheme of Pentisocracy

The mind of the poet began to conjure up pictures of a world of freedom and joy for mankind. With Southey and some others Coleridge planned by scheme Pantisocracy—a sort of communistic society on the banks of the Susquehenna in America. Here the Lake poets sought to retire to live up to the ideals of the Revolution. It was an enthusiasm which taking fire from the fire of the world made him think in the hope and joy which filled his heart that all things were possible to faith so strong and aspiration so intense."

Coleridge's disillusionment

The enthusiasm which Coleridge had felt for the Revolution began to wane when France drunk with the wine of conquest launched on the course of subjugating weaker countries and destroying their freedom. The French attack on Switzerland, a peace

loving country, roused the fire of Coleridge and he felt that the French people were taking to wrong paths and tracking the way to perdition and ruin. The disillusionment and exaspiration felt by the poet at this time find expression in two odes—'Ode on the Departing Year' (1796), 'France : An ode' (1797). The two poems "form the transition between his first wild hopes and his later conservate despair." In the 'Ode to the Departing Year' the poet denounces vehemently the forces reactionary against France typified in the expression "blood of hell" but in the 'Ode to France' the enthusiasm of the poet is cooled, and he feels disgusted with the Reign of Terror in Paris. The attack on Switzerland by France pained the poet, and his righteous indignation finds expression in the Ode. We have in this Ode thoughts and feelings charged with genuine passion. It was the last and the greatest poem produced by Coleridge under the influence of the French Revolution.

The proposed attack of France on England

The flickering hope of the poet that sanity and love of liberty would once again be revived among the patriots of France, was snuffed out when France intended to attack England and destroy the freedom of the British people. It was at this stage that Coleridge felt that "France was no longer the apostle of freedom but the apostle of despotism." Coleridge had once before him the ideal of love for mankind. But now he laid aside the old love for all mankind and revived his patriotic fervour and love for his motherland :

O my mother isle
How shouldst thou prove aught also but dear holy
To me, who, from thy lakes and mountain rills,
Thy clouds thy quite dales, thy rock and seas
Have drunk in all my intellectual life
All sweet sensations, and ennobling thoughts.

Coleridge's swing back to conservatism

Coleridge could not live for long under the influence of the French Revolution. He came over to conservatism earlier than Wordsworth. His enthusiasm was chilled more quickly than the ardour of Wordsworth for the Revolution. Coleridge condemned France :

That mockest Heaven, adulterous, blind
And Patriot only in pernicious toils !
And these they boast, Champion of human kind ?
To mix with kings in the low lust of sway,
Yell in the hunt, share the murderous prey ;
To insult the shrine of liberty with spoils
From freedom torn ; to tempt and to betray.

Steep decline in Coleridge's poetic flights

With the passing away of his enthusiasm, there was a steep fall in his poetic energy and poetic imagination. "Almost all his best poetic work is co-incident with the Revolution ; afterwards everything is incomplete. The weakness of will was doubled by disease, and troubled by opium but his poetic life, even his philosophic work, was a splendid failure." However after the disillusionment caused by the ravages of the French Revolution the poet diverted his attention to spiritual idealism which provided him some relief in his distress. This is the hour when his social zeal, his hopes for mankind freed from the hope of any immediate realization were transformed into a spiritual idealism. By 1811 he was fiercely anti-Napoleonic and a somewhat blind "Anti-Gallican and Anti-Jacobin."

Q. 8. Write an essay on Coleridge as the Poet of the Supernatural.

Ans. Coleridge—the supreme poet of the supernatural

Coleridge is essentially the poet of the super-natural, and he made an epoch in the poetry of supernaturalism by his *Rimê of the Ancient Mariner* and *Christabel*. Coleridge's imagination, says H. D. Trail, "seems to acquire poetic distinction in the region of the fantastic and the supernatural." The genius of Coleridge was eminently suited for giving to the supernatural the air of reality and being pretty conscious of his ability of transforming the supernatural with the air of realism and morality he chose to deal with supernatural incidents of his poetry. Referring to his choice for the supernatural poems in the 'Lyrical Ballads,' Coleridge wrote in 'Biographia Literaria,' "It was agreed that my endeavours should be directed to persons and characters supernatural or at least romantic, yet so as to transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a sublance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that 'willing suspension of disbelief' for the moment which constitutes poetic faith."

The Gothic novelists and their treatment of the supernatural

Coleridge was not the first artist to deal with the supernatural. The Gothic Romancers of the eighteenth century, Mrs. Radcliff, Horace Walpole, Monk Lewis. Beckford, had revelled luxuriously in the presentation of supernatural scenes and characters in their novels. But their handling of the supernatural was gruesome and grim, horrible and blood curdling. These novelists of the school of horror presented supernatural incidents and characters in such a horrified way that instead of being in love with supernatural figures one was bored by them. They tried to produce an atmosphere of mystery and horror by artificial devices such as noise and thunder, mysterious whisperings and spectral shapes. They actually presented horrid scenes of demons spilling blood, andof witches playing havoc in the lives of innocent persons. The

effect of the supernatural was not so powerful with them as the representation of the crude and lurid supernatural machinery Thus ghosts were represented as gnashing their teeth, and devils were brought out in their marrowless bones tearing and crashing human bodies.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SUPERNATURAL IN COLERIDGE

(1) Refined and subjective

It Coleridge's supreme effort as a poet of the supernatural to avoid all this gruesome, horrid and terrifying machinery of supernaturalism and to produce an air of refinement in the treatment of supernatural incidents and characters. He discarded the 'objective' representation of supernatural element as was done by the Gothic Romancers of the XVIII Century, and adopted the subjective and psychic' handling of the supernatural in line with 'subjective experience. He presented the supernatural as a phenomena of the mind and through the passions it excited in the mind. The sea-horrors in 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' were presented by Coleridge not directly but through the mental states of the Mariner. Thus it was by treating the supernatural not as a gruesome picture of horrid scenes but as a psychic phenomena that Coleridge opened a new line in the treatment of the supernatural. He handled the marvellous not for producing thrill or excitement, but for the sake of mystery that it awakened in the mind suggestive. Coleridge adopted the method of portraying the effect of the supernatural on the human characters. For example at one point in the 'Ancient Mariner' the poet tells us how horrifying the Mariner's face appeared. He does not describe the face itself. He simply describes the effect of the face upon the pilot's mind :

I moved my lips the pilot shrieked
And fell down in a fit.

Instead of describing the horrible spectre-woman the poet refers to the effect of that horrible sight upon the mind of the Mariner, and says that fear sipped his life blood.

(2) The supernatural as a symbol of the mystery of life

Not only Coleridge treated the supernatural as a psychic phenomena, but also made it "a symbol of the mystery of life, and a symbol of love which binds man, and bird, and beast and which is the life of all creation. This idea forms the core of the 'Rime. The terrible experience through which the Mariner had passed was a result of the violation of this law when he shot the albatross." Coleridge made the supernatural as a higher force to be recognised in human life. He considered it as an awakener of 'soul-love.' He came to the conclusion that the 'deepest emotions' of the soul

are explored by the experience of the supernatural. Instead of confining himself to an outworn dread of spectres and phantoms, he moved over a wide range of the motions of the human heart and touched equally on guilt and remorse, suffering and relief, hate and forgiveness, grief and joy.

(3) Convincing and Realistic.

Coleridge presented supernatural incidents in such a way as they appeared to be real. The supernatural in Coleridge appears to be real, not objectively alone but psychologically as well. Reality is not only the characteristic feature of the external objects of supernaturalism, but also of the experiences of the Mariner.

(4) Blending of the natural and the supernatural

The air of reality is imparted by the poet by skilfully blending the natural and supernatural phenomena. In one stroke Coleridge presents a skeleton ship, the spectre sea, the moon going up the sky, the woman and her death mate, the coming back to life of the ship's crew and the polar spirits talking to one another. These supernatural incidents are cleverly scattered in the poem. But they have not been left without their association with real and palpable objects of our work-a-day world. With these supernatural incidents the poet has artistically woven convincing pictures of Nature like the sun shining brightly at the outset, the mist and snow surrounding the ship, the freezing cold of the Arctic region, slimy creatures creeping upon the sea, the moon going up the sky, the water snakes moving in the water of shining white. The fusion and blending of the supernatural and the natural elements is so skilful and perfect that the total effect left on our mind is not of a weird and uncanny world but of a world in which strange things may happen in a mysterious manner. This fusion of the real and supernatural brings about the suspension of disbelief and lulls our critical and rational spirit of query at rest. "The realistic and the fantastic, the natural and the supernatural, the possible and the impossible have been so skilfully and artistically blended that the whole strikes us as quite convincing and credible,"

(5) The atmosphere of mystery

The greatness of Coleridge as a poet of the supernatural lies in his power to create the proper atmosphere for supernatural happenings. In 'Christabel' Coleridge achieves success by creating the proper atmosphere for the evil working of Geraldine on Christabel. "The element of marvel is not obtruded but slowly distilled into the atmosphere. The castle, the old mastiff, the tree with its jagged shadows are drawn with a delicacy of touch which produces an atmosphere of foreboding and suspense."

(6) Its suggestiveness

Another characteristic feature of Coleridge's supernaturalism is his suggestiveness. The poet drops hints and suggestions of supernatural happpenings. In 'Christabel,' it is only through constant hints and suggestions that we become aware of the supernatural forces that lie on every side. As Geraldine crosses the thresholds :

The lady sank, belike through pain
And Christable with might and main
Lifted her up, a weary weight
Over the threshold of the gate.

The sense of mystery is suggested when Geraldine suddenly cries :

Off wandering mother ! Peak and Pine !
I have power to bid thee flee !
Off, woman, off ! this hour is mine—
Though thou her guardian spirit be,
Off, woman, off ! 'tis given to me.

The suggestive method is used by Coleridge again in *The Three Graves*. The withering blight of mother's curse upon the lives of three innocent pensions—her daughter Mary, Mary's friends Ellen and the lover Edward has been suggested in the following lines :

And audibly she cried
Oh ! may aclining curse consume
This woman by my side.

Coleridge's eminence as the poet of supernaturalism lies in suggestiveness, in creating the atmosphere of mystery and indefiniteness by his subtle suggestions as in the following lines from *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* :

Water, water, everewhere
And all the boards did sink
Water, water, everywhere
Nor any drop to drink.

(7) Dramatic truth of Creation

Coleridge saturated supernatural touches, with human touches. and thereby created 'dramatic truth of emotions.' The supernatural incidents are so full of human interest as in the case of the Mariner who suffered agony of heart and brain and Christable who over-powered by Geraldine's unholy power that they acquire dramatic truth and produce a suspension of disbelief.

(8) Flight to old medieval world

Coleridge aroused the sense of supernatural mystery by taking the imagination far off distant lands and unknown places as

in 'The Ancient Mariner' and in 'Christabel.' "A known place, or the living present has no wonder or mystery, it is distance that is romantic and produce a sense of mystery and wonder." In 'Christabel' we are transferred to the old medieval days and it is easy for the poet to create association of magic, superstition, witchery in this remote period of human history. In the 'Ancient Mariner,' we are taken away from the din and bustle of our rattling world to a distant sea where the Mariner finds himself :

Alone, alone all, all alone
Alone on a wide, wide sea.

(9) Coleridge's special contribution

Coleridge's poetry marks, yet in another aspect an 'epoch in the poetry of the supernatural,' He introduced the new idea of a feeble will dominated by a stronger will-power. A man of weaker will is held in the grip of a man of superior will-power. The Wedding Guest is held by the eye of the Mariner and is made to listen to his tale. He makes an attempt to break away and cries :

Hold of ! unhand me gray—beared loon !

But the Mariner holds him in thrall :

Holds him with his glittering eye—
The wedding Guest stood still
And listens like a three years child :
The Mariner hath his will
The Wedding Guest set on a stone
He cannot choose but hear.

The idea of a 'superior-will-power-spell' is seen in 'The Three Graves' wherein the young people are held up by the curse of a mother possessing a greater measure of will power than her feeble victims.

Coleridge is, in fact, the supreme poet of supernaturalism and dreaminess. His three great poems 'Ancient Mariner,' 'Christabel,' and 'Kubla Khan' are marvels of beauty in the realm of the supernatural. All these three poems are concerned with the super-natural. 'Kubla Khan,' it is true, is less directly concerned than 'Christabel' or 'The Ancient Mariner,' but into its wild magnificence the supernatural had found its way whether in 'woman wailing for her demon lover' and the 'ancestral voices probhesying war' or in the magical music of its close when the poet seems to break the bonds of human kind and become a wild spirit of song. In 'Christabel' the whole scheme is based on the supernatural. The evil spirit who haunts the body of Geraldine and tries to ruin the innocent happiness of Christabel is in the true tradition of Vampires, and Coleridge infuses a mysterious dread into her. In her we see an embodiment of evil powers from another world and realise how helpless human-beings are against them. Both 'Kubla Khan' and

'Christabel' are fragments and we can only imagine what they might have been. 'The Ancient Mariner' is complete. In it Coleridge did what he sat out to do and showed what his powers could be. It deals with the supernatural on a large scale and in a generous sense. It introduced "a new supernaturalism into poetry; it frankly accepts the impossible, with its strictly inverted logic, and by reason of this intellectual, but never fantastic, witchcraft of words and rhythms. it infallibly achieves the "willing suspension of disbelief" at which Coleridge aimed." Arthur Symons wrote of it, "It is full of simple, daily emotion, transported by an awful power of sight to which the limits of reality are no barrier into an unknown sea and air...'The Ancient Mariner' is the most sustained piece of imagination in the whole of English poetry."

Q. 9. Write an essay on Coleridge as a Romantic poet.

Ans. Greatness of Coleridge as a Romantic poet

Of all the Romantic poets Coleridge is the most truly romantic. In fact, all the qualities of the romantic movement find their best expression in the poetry of Coleridge. More than Wordsworth, Coleridge succeeded in capturing the salient traits of romanticism in his poetry.

Coleridge's romantic imagination

Romantic poetry is characterized by a love for the imagination. It is born and created out of the imaginative play of the poet on the matter at his disposal. Coleridge is undoubtedly the most imaginative poet among the romantic poets of his age. The most conspicuous feature of his poems is the intense imaginative power superbly controlled in his finest poems by his unerring artistic sense. This rich imaginative quality of his poetry makes him the supreme romantic poet of the age. It would be difficult to speak temperately of Coleridge's enthusiasm for imagination. He gives unprecedented importance to imagination in his 'Biographia Literaria.' For Coleridge the real world was a world of fixities and dignities. It could be made worth our appreciation only by the imagination of the poet. Deriving his support from Kant and Schiller, Coleridge pleaded for the importance of the individual mind and imagination in most forceful words. Coleridge reacted against the philosophy of Locke and Hobbes. The 18th Century philosophers had reduced the human mind to tabula rasa. Coleridge reacted severely against this and he argued that the poets could give something really poetic only by depending on their imagination and not on reason. Intellectual rationalism leads to the predominance of fancy in literature. Coleridge wanted poetry to be governed by the principles of imagination and not by the principles of juxtaposing forces of fancy.

The poet of the Middle Ages

Romantic poets were not very much interested in dealing with mundane realities. They found escape from the world of sordid realities to the past and it was the Middle Ages to which the romantic poets found refuge from the worries and anxieties of the world. Coleridge is the poet of the Middle Ages. Of the romantic poets who went to the Middle Ages for inspiration, Coleridge was particularly fascinated by its magic and mystery. This note of medievalism in Coleridge's poetry is essentially a romantic note and brings him in the line of the romantic poets. In 'Christabel' Coleridge introduces the paraphernalia of medievalism, Viz., the ancient castle, a feudal lord, superstition, mystery, terror. In fact, Coleridge's great contribution to English Romanticism was the imaginative recreation of the weird spirit of the Middle Ages.

The dream quality of his poetry

The dreamy quality in Coleridge's poetry is essentially the quality of romanticism. The supreme strength of Coleridge lies in his marvellous dream faculty. One might add that the dream faculty lay at the root of his greatness as a poet and his weakness as a man. He is the first and the finest dreamer in English verse. 'The Ancient Mariner', 'Christabel' and 'Kubla Khan' are pieces of dream poetry. In the life and art of Coleridge the hours of sleep were more important than the working hours, and once he made the observation, "My dream became the substance of my life." In fact he fed on dreams and vitalised them in his poetry. This dream quality of Coleridge makes him the supreme romantic poet.

His treatment of the supernatural

Supernaturalism in Coleridge's poetry is essentially a romantic trait and his handling of the supernatural machinery and supernatural characters is so fine that he certainly claims the first place among the Romantic poets as far as this aspect of romantic poetry is concerned. Coleridge's treatment of the supernatural incidents is perfect and he succeeds in creating a semblance of reality so as to procure for them a willing suspension of disbelief for the moment. To achieve this result, Coleridge connected the supernatural with the truth of human-emotion. The supernatural incidents were linked with the working of human psychology. Coleridge presented the supernatural in a psychological manner, turning his lights more on the psychic representation of the supernatural incidents than to their gruesome, representation by piling horrible details as was done by the Gothic Romancers. Coleridge did not invent wonder or gruesome horrors, but presented the supernatural as a phenomenon of the mind and through the passions it excited in the mind. By treating the supernatural as a psychic phenomenon, Coleridge opened up a new rich literary line for other romantic poets to follow. This supernaturalism of

Coleridge is his claim to be recognized as a romantic poet. It is the basis of almost all his poetry. 'Kubla Khan', 'Christabel' and 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' are poems of pure supernaturalism. All these three poems are concerned with the supernatural. 'Kubla Khan', it is true, is less directly concerned than 'Christabel' or 'The Ancient Mariner,' but into its wild magnificence the supernatural has found its way whether in the 'women wailing for demon-lover' and 'the ancestral voices prophesying war' or in the magic of its close when the poet seems to break the bonds of human kind and become a wild spirit of song. In 'Christabel' the whole scheme is based on the supernatural. The evil spirit who haunts the body of Geraldine and tries to ruin the innocent happiness of Christabel is in the true tradition of vampires, and Coleridge infuses a mysterious dread into her. Both 'Kubla Khan' and 'Christabel' are fragments and we can only imagine what they might have been. 'The Ancient Mariner' is complete. In it Coleridge did what he set out to do and showed what his power could be. It too deals with the supernatural on a large scale and in a generous sense.

Addition of strangeness to beauty

Coleridge produces a sense of strangeness and wonder in his poetry and satisfies the definition of Romanticism given by Pater. In Pater's opinion, Romanticism denotes 'addition of strangeness to beauty'. Judged from this standard, Coleridge comes out as the supreme romantic poet because he weaves an enchantment of wonder and strangeness in his narration of 'The Ancient Mariner' and in the story of Geraldine and Christabel in 'Christabel'. The strange sense of mystery is being worked out by the poet with cleverness and we feel the atmosphere of mystery and strangeness all over 'The Ancient Mariner'.

In 'The Ancient Mariner' strangeness is created by a hundred delicate touches and subtle hints, made convincing to the reader by the profound psychological might of the poet. 'The mystery, the strangeness, the weirdness of the supernatural cast a peculiar spell on the dreamy imagination of Coleridge; his imagination worked most vigorously when it called up mysterious vision of the unseen world. Behind and beyond the seen world of nature and reality, is the unseen world of the supernatural, and this unseen world, peopled with mysterious beings and powers, was what Coleridge sought to make real by the wonder-working power of his imagination.

Love for Nature

Romantic poetry was marked by a love for Nature. In this respect Coleridge is no way inferior to Wordsworth, the high priest of Nature in the age of Romanticism. Coleridge's love for Nature is seen in almost all his poems. His poetry of Nature is

characterised by subtle and minute observations as well as by broad and general effects. The poet uses shapes, objects, and colours of Nature as symbols of mental and emotional states. He describes sites and scenes of nature as coloured by human emotion. He notices the Divine Spirit permeating through the objects of Nature, though later on he goes against this view of Nature and concludes that :

O, lady ! we receive but what we give,
And in our life alone does Nature live;
Ours is her wedding garment, ours-her shroud.

Coleridge's adoration of Nature is no less remarkable than of Wordsworth. He sees a spirit of joy in Nature particularly in the poem *The Nightingale*, and Nature to him remains a source of inspiration and delight even in *The Ode to Dejection*. Coleridge's love for Nature, therefore, is a special characteristic of his Romanticism and places him high in the rank of the romantic poets.

His Melancholy

A note of despair and melancholy was a general characteristic feature of the Romantic poets. A note of melancholy and undercurrent of pessimism can be traced in the poetry of almost all the Romantics. The note of melancholy is sounded by Coleridge in *Dejection : An Ode* and *The Pains of Sleep*. In the *Ode to Dejection*, Coleridge speaks :

A grief without a pang, void, dark ond drear,
A stifled, drowsy, unimpassioned grief,
Which finds no natural outlet, no relief,
In word, or sigh, or tear—

He complains :

My genial spirit fail;

since joy :

Which wedding Nature to us gives in dower;

has gone :

But new afflictions bow me down to earth.

This note of melancholy, sounded by Coleridge, is his link with Keats and Shelley.

Love for Music

The romantic poets had a love for music and Coleridge is one of the most melodius poets in English poetry. His 'Kubla Khan' shows his genius as a musician. 'The Rime' contains a series of cunning sound patterns. The lines of 'The Rime of the Ancient

Mariner' have a haunting and tilting melody about them. In this respect also Coleridge is a great romantic poet.

Coleridge's poetic diction

The simplicity of Coleridge's poetic diction again brings him in line with Wordsworth who opposed the uncommon and gaudy diction of the eighteenth century poets. Coleridge introduced simplicity in diction and broke away from the artificiality in language imported by the eighteenth century poets in their works.

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Q. 10. Write an essay on Coleridge as the poet of Nature.

Or

Critically evaluate Coleridge's treatment of Nature.

Ans. A comprehensive treatment of Nature

Wordsworth and Coleridge occupy an important place among the nature poets of England. Like Wordsworth, Coleridge not only loved Nature for her external beauty and grandeur, but sought to find a spirit and a divine intelligence permeating through the varied objects of nature. In Coleridge's nature poetry we come across a representation of Nature in its physical as well as mysterious, supernatural, and spiritualistic or pantheistic aspects. A complete picture of Nature in its physical and metaphysical forms can be seen in Coleridge's poetry.

His minute Nature-descriptions

Coleridge was a close and minut observer of Nature, and painted the outward forms of nature with "a degree of delicacy to which neither Wordsworth himself nor perhaps any other worshipper of nature, Keats excepted, ever quite attained." "It is in a highly sensitive apprehension of the external aspect of nature," says Walter Pater, "that Coleridge identifies himself most closely with one of the Lake School, a tendency. instinctive, and no more matter of theory in him as in Wordsworth. That record of the

green light
Which lingers in the west

and again of

The western sky
And its peculiar tint of yellow green.

is a characteristic example of a singular watchfulness of the minute effect and expression of natural scenery pervading all he writes." The ability to portray Nature minutely and in detail is also noticed

in the opening lines of *The Nightingale* where the poet gives a detailed poetic description of the objects of nature. At the same time he possessed an equal mystery of broad and general effects, as seen in the description of ice-fields and tropical ocean in 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner.' There is always a clarity, a representation in the landscapes painted by Coleridge. The landscape of 'Kubla Khan' is visualized clearly and the strength and firmness of the description of Nature in the dreamy poem is remarkable.

Coleridge's cosmopolitan love of Nature

Coleridge was not only interested in presenting the glory and grandeur of Nature in the Lake district but also Nature in other countries of Europe. Coleridge's Nature poetry rises to grandeur when he describes the sunrise over the Mount Blanc in his 'Hymn before Sunrise in the Vale of Chamouni'. In the description that the poet gives of the magnificent spectacle of sunrise over the snow peaks of the Alps, we notice the hand of a painter. He survéys the glorious panorama of Nature spreading before his eyes and beautifully describes the snowy peaks capped in glory in a language that pulsates with the feeling of joy. The glorious scene comes like a benign influence animating from the soul of the poet. The poet rises to a height of poetic eloquence in the last stanza of this Hymn. At the end, the poet addresses the 'hoar Mount' with feelings of deep emotion almost verging on the level of adoration of Nature in the following words :

Rise, O ever rise,
Rise like a cloud of incense from the Earth !
Thou kingly spirit throned among the hills,
Thou dread ambassador form earth to heaven.
Great Hierach ! tell thou the silent sky,
And tell the stars, and tell you rising sun,
Earth with her thousand voices, praises God.

Joy in Nature

In the earlier stages of his adoration of Nature, Coleridge like Wordsworth found a spirit of joy pervading the objects of Nature. In the 'Nightingale' he rejects the conventional idea of the bird's melancholy. He says :

In Nature there is nothing melancholy,

In the 'Ode to Dejection' he points out :

Joy lady is the spirit and power
Which wedding Nature gives to us in dower
A new Earth and a new Heaven
Undreamt of by the sensual and the proud.

Coleridge's use of colour

In presenting the objects of Nature the poet was p[illegible]ularly fascinated by colour. Coleridge had a sense of colour [illegible]arable

to that of Keats in poetry and of Turner in painting. The colour element in the presentation of tne glittering aspects of Nature is something of rare loveliness. Coleridge's interest in the colourful and glittering things of Nature is a love which he shared with Keats, another great poet of Nature in the Romantic Age. Referring to this love of Coleridge for colourful aspects of Nature, Symons remarks beautifully, "Rossetti called Coleridge the Turner of poets, and indeed, there is in Coleridge aerial glitter which we find in no other poet and in Turner only among painters. With him colour is always melted in atmosphere which it shines through like fire within a rain in crystal. It is liquid colour, the dew on flowers, or a mist of rain in bright sunshine. His images are for the most part derived from water, sky, the changes of weather, shadow of things rather than things themselves, and usually mental reflections of them.

"The first personal merit which appears in his early works is a sense of colour. In a poem written at twenty-one he sees Fancy : 'Bathed in rich amber-glowing floods of light', and next year the same colour reappears more expressive in a cloud :

Wholly bright.
With a rich and amber light.

The two women in *The Two Graves* during a momentous pause are found discussing whether the rays of the sun are green or amber ; a valley is :

Tinged yellow with the departing light ;

seen through corn at evening,

The level sunshine glimmers with green light ;

and there is the carefully observed

Western skies
And his peculiar tint of yellow green.

The Ancient Mariner is full of images of light and luminous colour in sky and sea ; Glycine's song in 'Zapolya' is the most glittering poem in our language with a soft glitter like that of light seen throught water.''

Sense of mystery and the supernatural

The beautiful sites and scenes of Nature which Coleridge presented in a colourful language were always coloured with a sense of mystery and a touch of the supernatural. The poet transfigured the beautiful sites and scenes of Nature with the touch of mystery and super-naturalism. Vaughan aptly points out in his article on Coleridge in the 'Cambridge History of English Literature', Volume XI : "That the outer world is presented to us not directly but through a vale of mystery which softens all that is harsh in outline

or colour by a k nd of second sight, which rather recalls object, once familiar, to the memory, than offers their actual image to the eye." The same critic goes on saying that, "Nothing, in short, that he found in the outer world attained its rightful value from him until, 'by sublimation strange', it had passed into the realm of shadows which Schiller conceived to be the true region both of poetry and of action."

His landscapes are always humanised

Though Coleridge presented beauties of Nature in a mysterious light, but his presentation was never remote as to be away from the key of human life. His landscapes are always seen through the human atmosphere. The beauty in his poems of the marvellous and the supernatural is never unearthly. We are always in the presence of :

Love and thoughts that yearn for human kind,

Coleridge's Nature poetry shows his power of attuning moods of emotion to landscapes and movements of weather. As early as 1795, the poet presented this action and inter-action of Nature and the human spirit as in the poem 'The Aeolian Harp' :

O ! the one Life within us and abroad,
Which meets all motion and becomes its soul.
A light in sound, a sound like power in light
Rhythm in all thought and joyance everywhere.

Coleridge's comparison with Wordsworth

Like Wordsworth, Coleridge looked upon Nature as animal, living and having an intelligence of its own. The poet saw behind all the phenomena of nature the veiled presence of God :

Father of Earth and Heaven
All-conscious Presence of the Universe,
Nature's vast ever-acting energy
In Will, in Deed, impulse of All in All.

The pantheistic note which Wordsworth had sounded is also struck by Coleridge in the 'Aeolian Harp'. Here he looks upon Nature as a series of harps on which the Divine breeze, i.e., the soul of God plays. He believes in the Divine spirit pervading the whole universe :

O ! the one life within us and abroad
A light in sound, a sound-like power in light.

In *Frost at Mid-night* the same pantheistic creed finds an almost Wordsworthian expression :

So shalt thou see and hear
The lovely shapes and sounds intelligible
Of that eternal language, thy God

Utters, who from eternity doth teach
Himself in all things in Himself.

Coleridge in his youth found multitudes of spirits, in forming all the organic and inorganic forms of nature. These spirits were in the service of God and ran through the objects of Nature. Nature had a life in God, and each of her forms, informed by a distinct spirit, had a distinct life of its own. This idea forms the basis of *The Ancient Mariner*, where the guilty man is subjected to a punishment by the avenging spirits, and then is redeemed by the "seraph band."

Commenting on the similarity of outlook in the Nature poetry of Wor sworth and Coleridge, Kathleen E. Royds remarks, "Both Wordsworth and Coleridge looked on Nature, in her entirety, as an expression of the divine, and in her organic whole all animated beings were one in fellowship. Thus their attitude to her was bound up with their philosophy and was extended to active sympathy with all sentient creatures."

A change in Coleridge's philosophy of Nature

Towards the end of his poetic career, however, Coleridge's view of Nature, that there was a spirit everywhere, and that spirit worked for the joy of man, underwent a complete change, He could not see a living spirit pervading the objects of Nature. In the *Ode to Dejection* the change is clearly noticed in Coleridge's attitude towards Nature. Here he asserts that Nature has no life of her own and that it is we who give life to Nature :

O Lady ! we receive but what we give,
And in our life alone does Nature live :
Ours is her wedding garment, ours her shroud.

In this Ode the poet comes to the conclusion that we react our moods in Nature. If we are happy, Nature appears to be happy to us, and if we are sad, Nature also seems to be mourning to us. Nature cannot give joy to a heart which had already no joy in it. The joy is within us and Nature only touches that joy when we feel joy within.

Causes for the change in Coleridge's attitude to Nature

This change in the attitude of Coleridge was perhaps the result of his study of the transcendental philosophy of Germany. Coleridge learnt from the German philosophers that the existence of the external world is not actual, but phenomenal. It is in our thought that we give forms to external objects and thinking these we build the world of Nature ourselves. Nature thus lives in us and when we receive impressions from nature we do not receive some thing distinct from us, but our own thoughts, as reflected from the external world. This idea is expressed both in 'The

Aeolian Harp' and in 'Ode to Dejection'. "We each in our thinking", explains Brooke, "make the outward world for ourselves; but our thinking in this sphere is in source the one thought of God in which, infinitely varied though a myriad secondary forms of thought, the universe consists."

His symbolism

At the end we may say that Coleridge uses the shapes, objects, and colours of Nature as symbols of mental and emotional states. He uses the symbols of Air, Water, Fire, and Earth to express their reaction on the human-spirit. It is through these symbols of Nature that the inner state of man is represented. Moon, moonlight, half-light, half-gloom of the moon are recurring symbols of Coleridge's verse. These symbols of Nature are employed to represent the mysteries and uncertainties of mental life.

Summing up

On the whole, it can be stated unhesitatingly that Coleridge was not only the great poet of Nature who represented the external beauties of Nature in their mysterious aspects, but also the great pontheist who saw in the external world of nature the veiled presence of God, as Wordsworth did presenting the mystic vision of Nature as in the following lines from 'This Lime Tree Bower'.

On the wide landscape, gaze till all doth seem
Less gross than bodily, and of such hues
As veil the Almighty spirit

3.
Keats

Q. 11. Write a note on the sensuous quality of Keats'. Poetry.

Or

"The poetry of Keats is concrete and sensuous." Explain this statement with illustrations.

Or

Keats longed "for a life of sensation rather than of thought." Show in what way his poems are a fulfilment of this longing.

Ans. Keats' Escapism

Keats poetry was not in the chill grip of politics or propaganda, and he never allowed political considerations to make inroads into the sacred realm of poetry. He fled from the work-a-day world into an enchanted realm of beauty, loveliness and sensuousness and jealously closed the gates of poetry against the intrusions of ordinary human affairs. Shelley revolutionary idealism colours all his works; Keats idealism reflects nothing of the life of his day. He took from Medievalism material for fashioning his sequestered land of beauty, but what he found here, he used for 'sensuous delight', and not ethical inspiration.

Keats' cult of poetry

It was Keats poetic creed that poetry should make an appeal to the senses, and art should create beauty, loveliness and charm, to feed the senses of strom-tossed man wearied out by the fever and fret of the world. Keats believed that poetry need not be allied to philosophic or political thought, but it should certainly minister to the senses, gratifying the feeling for touch, taste, colour, and smell. The poet should present beautiful and colourful word-pictures appealing to the five senses. "Sensation to him was all important, because only through sensation could he come into communion with the principle of beauty. Therefore he welcomed every lovely sensation and revelled in it to the full whenever the opportunity occurred. It was only when he found that the sensations of his love for Fanny Brawne were more than his nerves could stand, especially as this love was thwarted, that he realized that a life of sensation is, in certain circumstances, disastrous. We may deplore the fact that he did not discover this sooner but Keats would not have been Keats if he hed."

Keats is the most sensuous Romantic Poet

Keats was true to his poetic creed, and his poetry is, in fact, the most sensuous and sense appealing than the poetry of any of his contemporaries. Keats was a sensuous poet in the best sense of the term. Sensuousness is a paramount bias of Keats genius. His poetry has scarcely been equalled in description of the beauties perceptible to the sense such as, form, colour, perfume, music. It was his mission to interpret not the highest spiritual life. but the highest type of 'sensuous beauty.' "His art is full of passion" says Cazamian, "it is above all aspiration and desire ; and the object of this desire is not the intellectual beauty of Shelly, but that which reveals itself to the enchantment of the senses."

Display of the five senses in Keats' Poetry

Poetry, according to Milton, should be 'simple, sensuous, passionate.' "No one" says Matthew Arnold, "can question the eminency in Keats poetry of the quality of sensuousness. Keats as a poet is abundantly and enchantingly sensuous ; the question with some people will be whether he is anything else ? Many things may be brought forward which seem to show him as under the fascination and sole domination of sense, and dasiring nothing better." 'Poetry as it came to Keats was not a spiritual vision as with Wordsworth, nor an emancipating vision, as with Shelley, but a joy wrought out of sensation as exquisite as Coleridge's by an imagination not weird and mystic like his, but plastic and pictorial.' There is thus an unanimity of opinion that Keats is nothing if not throughout sensuous and impassioned, and his effectiveness lies in the exercise of five senses. As a matter of fact sensuousness operates every where across his poetry. In the early part of his career his fancy was always dwelling on outward feminine form :

Light feet, dark violet eyes, and parted hair
Soft dimpled hands ; white neck and creamy breasts,
Are things on which dazzled senses rest
Till the fond eyes forget their stare.

The following lines from the sonnet which he wrote in the last year of his life are a fine illustration of his sensuousness :

Pillowed upon my fair love's ripening breast
To feel for ever its soft fall and swell,
Awake for ever in a sweet unrest,
Still, still to hear tender-taken breath
And to live ever......or else swoon to death.

Keats' sensuousness is not limited to mere representation of physical passion, nor it is of a light and sportive nature. Some of his poems are expressions of the sensuous embodiments of the feelings of ennui, fatigue and physical languour. In the *Ode to*

Nightingale the poet expresses the sensation of languid and aching heart :

> *My heart aches and a drowsy numbeness pains*
> *My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk*
> *Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains,*
> *One minute past and Lethe-wards had sunk.*

The disembodied sense of 'taste' is well represented in the following lines :

> *Here is wine*
> *Alive with sparkles—never, I aver*
> *Since Ariadne was a vintager,*
> *So cool a purple ; taste these juicy pears,*
> *Sent me by sad Vertumnus, when his fears,*
> *Were high about Pomona : here is cream,*
> *Deepening to richness from a snowy gleam—*
> *Sweeter than that nurse Amalthea skimm'd*
> *For the boy Jupiter ; and here, undimm'd*
> *By any touch, a bunch of blooming plums*
> *Ready to melt between an infant's gums.*

The richness and delicacy of 'sound and sight' can best be represented from *The Eve of St. Agnes* :

> *That ancient Beadsman heard the prelude soft,*
> *And so it chanc'd, for many a door was wide*
> *From hurry to and fro, soon, up aloft,*
> *The silver snarling trumpets 'gan to chide !*
> *The level chambers, ready with their pride,*
> *Were glowing to receive a thousand guests,*
> *The carved angels, ever-eyed.*
> *Star'd, where upon their heads the cornice rests,*
> *With their blown back, and wings put crosswise on their heads*
> *The arras, rich with horseman, hawk and hound,*
> *Flattered in the besieging wind's uproar ;*
> *And the long carpets rose along the gusty floor.*

Delicacy and richness in sensation of 'touch' and 'sound' are found throughout when in an ante-chamber every guest :

> *Had felt the cold full sponge to pleasure pressed*
> *By ministering slaves upon his hands and feet.*

The following lines from *Lamia* make an appeal to sight and sense of colour :

> *She was a gordion shape of dazzling hue,*
> *Vermilion-spotted, golden, green and blue,*
> *Stipped like a zebra, freckled like a pard*
> *Eyed like a peacock, and all crimson-barr'd,*

And full of silvermoons that, as she breathed,
Dissolved, or brighter shone, or interwreathed
Their lustres with the gloomier tapestries.

In the following lines from the *Eve of St. Agnes* the appeal is to the eye, to the sense of toucɔ, to the sense of smell, and to the ear :

Of all its wreathed pearls her hair she frees
Unclasps her warmed jewels one by one
Loosens her fragrant bodice, by degrees
Her rich attire creeps rustling to her knees.

Keats portrays techni-colour pictures. The multi-coloured wines and flowers are painted gorgeously :

Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,
With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,
And purple-stained mouth.

The sense of sound :

Soft went the music that soft air along ;
While fluent Greek a vowel'd undersong
Kept up among the guests,

The sence of smell :

Then in a silken scarf, sweet with dews
She wrapped it up.

The sence of 'touch' is again well represented in the *Eve of St. Agnes* :

St. Agnes' Eve—Ah, bitter chill it was
The owl, for all his feathers, was a-cold ;
The hare limp'd trembling through the frozen grass
And silent was the flock in woolly fold ;
Numb were the Beadsman's fingers, while he told
His rosary, and while his frosted breath,
Like pious incense from a censer old,
Seem'd taking flight for heaven, without a death,
Past the sweet Virgin's picture, while his prayer he saith,

And

Soon, trembling in her soft and chilly nest
In sort of wakeful swoon, perplex'd she lay,
Until the poppied warmth of sleep oppress'd
Her soothed limbs, and soul fatigued away.

If you want to enjoy the sensations of four out of five senses, then turn to these lines from the *Ode to a Nightingale* :

I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,

Nor what soft insense hangs upon the boughs,
But, in embalmed darkness, guess each sweet
Wherewith the seasonable month endows
The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild ;
White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine ;
Fast fading violets covered up in leaves ·
And mid-May's eldest child,
The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,
The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.

The keenness and alterness of Keats sense perceptions find expression in the application of sensuous adjectives to Nature and abstraction e.g., 'ardent marigolds', 'delicious ramble', 'watery clearness', 'silken ties' (for human relationship), 'delicious ear', 'delicious face', 'soft dying day', 'melodious plot', 'embalmed darkness', 'drowsy ignorance', 'anguish moist'.

In the presentation of the beauties of nature Keats is mainly interested in the presentation of sensuous pictures. "Where as Wordsworth spiritualises, and Shelley ntellectualise Nature, Keats is content to express her through the senses. The colour, the scent, the touch, the pulsating music—these are the things that stir him to his depths. There is not a mood of earth he does not love, not a season that will not cheer and inspire him. The setting sun will always set one to rights, or if a sparrow come before my window, I take part in its existence and pick about the gravel."

Stopford A. Brooke rightly emphasizes Kests sensuous love for nature when he says, "It was a temper in Keats of unmuffled pleasure, a sensitive girl like sensuous pleasure in beauty, and in the consolation of beauty of the soul. He flies from one beautiful object of Nature to another in a butterfly fashion, tasting and sipping honey and little caring to settle upon any one. He is thus completely and frankly sensuous in his attitude towards Nature."

Pictorial quality of Keats' art

Part of the poet's sensuousness lies in the great 'pictorial' quality of his poetic art in which he equals the excellence of Spenser. "It is impossible for Keats", says Brandes, "to name any conception or any thought without at once proceeding to represent it in a corporeal, plastic form. His numerous allegories have the same life and fire as if they were executed in by some of the best Italian artists of the 16th century......upon this background of sensitiveness of the sensuous pictures ries, distinct and round, like the reliefs on a shield. The word 'weided' comes voluntarily to one's lips when one thinks of Keats' pictures." Compare the figure of Autumn—

And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
Steady thy laden head across a brook ;

Or by a cedar-press, with patient look,
Thou watches the last oozings, hours by hours.

Or that of Cupid and Psyche with

'Their arms embraced and their pinions too,
Their lips touch'd not, but had not bade adieu,
As if disjoin'd by soft handed slumber
And ready still past kisses to outnumber
At tender eye-down of aurorean love.'

Or that of Saturn in 'Hypeion' :

'Upon the sudden ground
His old right hand lay nerveless, listless, dead,
Unsceptred and his realmless eyes were closed.'

A thorough sensuous poet

Undoubtedly, Keats is sensouous through and through. But his sympathies broadened as his mind matured. In his maturer poems, there is an awakening intellect and a spiritual passion. But it was not the mere worshicip of simple sensations that characterised his attitude to the external world. His senses were transfigured by imagination and their acuteness becomes so creative as to 'make the loveliness of the real world still lovelier.' Fausset remarks : "Keats mind is mainly sensuous by direct action,but it also works by reflex action, from sensuousness into sentiment. Certainly, some of his work is merely extremely sensuous ; but this is a work in which the poet was trying his materials and his powers, and rising towards mastery of his real faculy and his final function. In his maturer performances in the Odes, for example, and in *Hyperion* sensuousness is penetrated by sentiment, voluptuousness is permeated by vitality, and aestheticism is tempered by intellectualism. In Keats' palace of poetry, the nucleus is sensuousness, but the superstructure has chambers of more abiding thing and more permanent colours."

Keats' later poetry is free from sensuousness

There was a tendency in Keats' later poetry to be free from the hold of sensation. He was not satisfied with the life of sensations but sought to grapple with the sorrow and sufferings of the world. The spirit of humanitarianism that touched Shelley also come to have its influence on Keats. He started to cherish the vision of glorifying human life, and the grim truth began to have its way with the poet that higher scales of life could not be attained by any one except those :

To whom the miseries of the world
Are misery and will not let them rest.

The poet sought to give up the early ideal of sensuous poetry when he had once written :

And they shall be counted poet Kings
Who simply tell the most heart-easing things.

for something higher and nobler. Now he realised that he could attain immortality better by moving to higher tasks than merely revelling in sensuous joy as he says :

Yes, I must pass for a nobler life
Where I may find the agonies
of human heart.

Q. 12. Write a note on Keats' Hellenism and estimate the poetical qualities that have caused Keats to be called a Greek.

Ans. Most The Romantic poets had a fascination for Greek life

The dawn of the nineteenth century witnessed a growing dissatisfaction among poets with the sordid and materialistic life of their times. Wordsworth, in a mood of indignation, expressed strong desire to be a pagan and a Greek rather than remain a Christian lost in the dirty game of money making. In the sonnet *The World is too much with us* he preferred to be a Greek, than a christian and in an impassioned mood he broke out into his pagan cry :

Great God, I'd rather be,
A pagan suckled in a creed outworn
So might I standing on this pleasant lea
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn.
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea,
Or hear old Triton blowing his wreathed horn.

Shelley's fascination for Greece

Shelley too had a fascination for Greece and his *Hellas* represents his adoration of the Greek way of life and hellenic attitude towards art. Byron was attracted by Greece and was on his way to join the Greek army in 1820 to fight for Greek freedom against the Turks. But of all the Romantic poets it was John Keats who had the warmest admiration for Greece and cultivated the hellenic lore in his poetry. Keats was essentially a Greek among the English poets. If it is asked how the son of an ostler came to be the typical representative of Greek thought in a sense in which Wordsworth and Coleridge and even Shelley were not, the answer can be given in Shelley's words, "Keats was a Greek."

Keats' adoration of Greek life and literature

Keats' love and liking for Greek poetry, mythology, way of life, attitude towards nature were cultivated with great care, and his entire poetic output is saturated with the hellenic spirit. Keats did not know enough Greek to enter into spirit of hellenic artists.

His attachment and devotion to Greece was the outcome of three powerful forces that worked in his life. The Greek influence on Keats came through literature, sculpture and innate tendency or inborn instinct.

Keats' indebtedness to the Elizabethans

As regards literature, it is necessary to note that Keats had learnt by heart Lempriere's 'Classical Dictionary', and he was familiar with gods and goddesses of Greek mythology. He studied Elizabethan poets and dramatists interested in classicism and his vision of Greece really came to him "through the works of the Elizabethan writers who had freely availed themselves of the materials of mythology." He was introduced to Homer by Chapman, and to quote his own lines from 'On first looking into Chapman's Homer':

Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken ,
Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eye
He star'd at the Pacific—and all his men
Look'd at each other with a wild surmise
Silent upon a peak in Dorien.

The effect of Elgin Marbles on Keats

The second source of Keats' Hellenism is the Elgin Marbles obtained chiefly from the Parthenon by Lord Elgin in 1811. Those rare specimens of Greek sculpture exercised a powerful influence on Keats. There is every truth in the statement that "Hyperion is in poetry what the Elgin Marbles are in sculpture of Greek art." The influence of this piece of sculpture on the poet can be seen plainly in this sonnet 'On seeing the Elgin Marbles' and in the odes 'On a Grecian Urn' and 'On Indolence', poems of unrivalled and distinct beauty. But stronger than either of these is the third element in Keats' art—the inborn temperamental 'Greekness' of his mind. Selincourt speaks of Keats' 'essential kinship with the thought of Greece.'

Keats' love for Greek legeads and stories

Now let us examine the Hellenic traits and Greek qualities in his poetry. The first and the most important trait which binds him unquestionably with the Greeks is his love for Greek legends and stories. For themes and subjects of poetry, Keats frequently goes to Greek stories and myths. The themes of his major works like 'Endymion', 'Hyperion', 'Lamia'. 'Grecian Urn', 'Psyche' are taken from Hellas. Then there are hymns to pagan gods and goddesses : Diana, Neptune, Venus. Cupid, Pan, Becchus, Hermes. References and allusions to Greek stories are interspersed in almost all his works.

Allusions to Greek mythology

Even those poems which owe littles to Greek inspiration are littered with allusions to Greek mythology. The Nightingale becomes the "light winged Dryad of the trees." He longs for a cup full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene, and longs to fly to the leafy world of the Nightingale 'charioted by Bacchus and his pards'. This mental saturation of the ancient mythology of Greece suggests a temperamental affinity with the Greek way of life and religious learning. Furthermore, a great measure of Keats' imagery comes from old pagan rituals : censer, shrine, fane, pipe, sacrifice. In description he introduces the happy combination of movement and repose—a characteristic of Greek art. In 'Psyche' the lovers are described as :

Their lips touched not, but had not bade adieu.

Simplicity of expression

The simplicity and directness of expression, which form an important feature of Greek poetry, are conspicuously present in Keats' works.

Keats' mastery of statuesque effect

Another quality which connects Keats with Hellenism is his mastery of statuesque effect, so very well present in *Ode in Autumn* lines 19-20 and *Ode on a Grecian Urn* lines 17-20. Keats' adoration of beauty and sensuousness are again typical hellenic qualities. His passion for beauty is closely allied to the Greeks and so is his appeal to the senses. In this worship of the concrete beauty, with all its loveliness of form and colour, Keats is a Greek.

Keats' attitude towards Nature is hellenic

Keats' attitude towards Nature is particularly hellenic and the personification of the powers of Nature as in the 'Ode to Autumn' is a peculiar hellenic quality in his nature poetry. "He is a Greek also in the manner of his response to the appeal of Nature, in the consciousness of primal bodily kinship with earth and quick sensitiveness of its magic of colour, sound, odour, and touch, and in the imaginative apprehension of the living forces about him, which gives them a 'local habitation and name and figures them forth as deities of woods and streams, of sky and sea." Like the Greeks, Keats people woods and glades with fauns and dryads, and to him every tree issociated with Dryad. In the multitudinous life of nature Keats enjoyed the same rapture which the Greeks had felt. "He indeed resembles the Greeks" says Courthope "in his vivid sense of the joyous and multitudinous life of nature ; and he loved to follow them in dreaming of the powers of nature as embodied in concrete shapes of supernatural human activity and grace."

The fatalistic tone

In the human interest which he at times, as in *Lamia*, allows to dominate minor details, Keats has been considered a Greek. His attitude towards life is coloured with the same fatalistic tone which marked the works of Greek dramatists.

Non–Greek qualities in Keats' poetry

The above stated qualites of Hellenism make Keats a Greek in the nineteenth century. A deep scrutiny of his works also reveals certain romantic and non-Greek qualities in his poetry Keats was not a complete Greek. He had his affinities with the Elizabethans. Like the Elizabethans, and much unlike the Greeks, Keats loved 'fine excess' in poetry. He was exuberant and ornate, and lacked the restraint and discipline of the Greeks. He loved richness. colour, picturesqueness, and chafed under the restraint of discipline imposed by the Greeks.

"Graceful lines, pleasing contours and harmony of proportion mark the Greek art." But to Keats loveliness of form in Greek art made little appeal. In the presence of the Elgin Marbles his whole being was flooded with light of life that flashed into his soul through the sculptured figures. In his two sonnets on the marbles and in his great ode there is little reference to beauty of form. The ode conveys little of the surface beauty of the shape and form of Grecian men. Keats was moved not by the form of Greek art, but by the deeper significance of the figures, by their emotional appeal, and the life-truth embodied therein."

A rare union of elassical discipline with Elizabethan romanticism in Keat's poetry

Graham Hough has tried to show that "the Greek influence on Keats has been vastly exaggerated. He neither knew nor cared any thing about Greek History and civilization." In fact, Keats cared as much for Greece as for his own country. He combined the classicism of Greece with the romanticism of the Elizabethans. "Keats effects the rare union of classical discipline, 'guided by the example and precepts, of the ancients, with more intrinsically precious matter which the artist finds in Romanticism."

Q. 13. Write a note on Keats' conception of Beauty.

Or

Comment on the statement, "The aestheticism of Keats also has intellectual side."

Ans. Both Shelley and Keats were worshippers of Beauty

Shelley and Keats were the great adorers of beauty. They stood together as the two prophets of beauty in the early 19th Century poetry. But the distinction between these two poets as lovers of beauty was vital and significant. Whereas Shelley was interested in the philosophical and intellectual aspect of beauty, Keats was delighted in the representation of beauty in its sensuous and physical aspects. Beauty for Shelley was metaphysical. It was an intellectual idea, a spirit working through the universe and ultimately indistinguishable from love, which he believed toustain the universe. Keats approached beauty from the other side. To him "it is an exaltation of senses, but of the senses made creative by that exaltation." "Oh ! for a life of sensations rather than of thought" he cried, and he felt exhilarated at the sight of beauty in whatever form it came before him. He was a lover of beauty, and in the presence of beauty of any kind he was like a man in the presence of a woman whom he loved.

Keats' conception of Beauty

"The central fact of Keats' life was the existence of the spiritual essence called beauty ; only, instead of his enthusiasm for beauty leading him to philosophical speculation, as it led Shelley, he interested himself in revealing this beauty to human senses and proclaiming its universal importance, choosing poetry as his medium. Though beauty was even more an inspiration and enthusiasm to Keats than to Shelley, it was not ethereal spirit of perfection that he pursued, but rather the beauty that he knew, the beauty that we can perceive in colour and sound and form— "Beauty, beauty that must die." Keats and Shelley stand together in their generation as the two prophets of beauty, but the distinction between them is vital. Keats travelled from earth to Heaven, Shelley from Heaven to earth.,"

A devoted lover of Beauty

Keats' conception of beauty and his attitude towards beauty underwent a change with the passage of time though at all stages of his appreciation for beauty, he essentially remained a devotee and a lover of beauty. His sensitive imagination was thrilled to ecstasy by the touch of beauty from whatever quarter it came. His friend Haydon tells us that the "humming of bee, the sight of a flower, the glitter of the sun, seemed to make his nature tremble. Then his eyes flashed, his cheek glowed, and his mouth quivered." At all periods of his life the moving principle that guided him was the adoration of beauty. His declared, "With a great poet, the sense of beauty overcomes every other consideration." He once said, "I feel assured I should write from the mere yearning and fondness for the beautiful, even if my night's labours should be burned every morning." "Beauty in all things", says Middleton Murry, "This was Keats' great poetic intuition, and revelation of

this beauty, the great human purpose to which he dedicated himself and for which he was prepared to die."

Physical appreciation of Beauty

In the early stages of his life, Keats' appreciation of beauty was purely physical. He was interested in the beauty of woman and the beauty of nature. They provided him the joy for which his soul hungered. The loveliness of women attracted him and he found beauty and joy in :

Light feet, dark violet eyes, and parted hair
Soft dimpled hands, white neck, and creamy breast.

Beauty as a source of Joy

In *Endymion* he presented his joy in the beauty of nature in its varied aspects and came out with the assertion :

A thing of beauty is a joy for ever,
Its loveliness increases ; it will never,
Pass into nothingnes, but still will keep
A bower quiet for us, and a sleep
Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breathing.

Beauty in Nature

The love for the beautiful sights and scenes of nature, its flowers and perfumes remained with Keats a life long passion. The *Ode to Autumn* is a glorification of the beauty of nature, and in the *Ode to a Nightingale* we can enjoy the beauty of flowers and lucent light of the moon making its way through the leaves :

The grass, the thicket and the fruit-tree wild
White hawthorn and the pastoral eglantine
Fast fading violets covered up in leaves
And mid-May's eldest child
The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine
The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.

Keats' sensuous appreciation of Nature

In short, in his appreciation for the beauties of nature Keats remained essentially sensuous. In the words of his friend Haydon, "each object of Nature was beautiful for its own sake and for its magic of colours, sound, odour and touch. It is this intense whole-hearted sensuous love forms of natural beauty that inspired Keats."

Philosophical concept of Beauty

From this world of beauty in female from and nature, Keats advanced to a philosophic concept of beauty. He soon came out of 'the realm of Flora and old Pan' of 'Sleep and Poetry, and by the

time he come to the writing of 'Ode to a Grecian Urn', he identified truth with beauty. He made truth and beauty as different aspects of one supreme reality. He formulated his philosophy of beauty in the concluding lines of the 'Ode' :

Beauty is truth, truth beauty—that is all
Ye, know on earth, and all ye need to know.

Beauty is Truth in Keats' poetry

Keats thought that beauty was eternal and indestructible. Beauty and truth were the highest characteristics of the transcendental being whom we call God. They were very much akin to each other. In his letter to Baily Keats further explained his philosophic concept of beauty and truth, as conceived by the poet's imagination. He wrote to Baily, "I am certain of nothing, but of the holiness of the heart's affection, and truth of imagination. What the imagination seizes as beauty must be truth." "I am more zealous in this affair" he went on, "because I have never been able to perceive how anything can be known for truth by consecutive reasoning." On the first day of the year 1819 Keats announced once more and more clearly his peculiar criterion of truth—"I can never feel cartaiu of any truth but from a clear perception of its beauty." It was only ten days after this letter that Keats wrote another letter to his brother George in which he revealed his mind in the very act of this discovery of truth by the sing of beauty which is knowledge. Commenting on the philosophic attitude of Keats towards beauty Middleton Murry observes, "It may be well to insist once more that Keats means precisely what he says : that he is unable to recognise truth except by the sign of beauty." Commenting on this philosophic understanding of beauty and truth as identical Clarnce Torpe remarks, "Keats' conception of beauty was on a higher plane than has been commonly supposed. To him beauty is the subjective reaction to a glimpse beyond the veil. It is truth–truth made to live through the power of creatie imagination that is capable of dissolving the flying vapours of intangible substance into reality or truth seized through the power of the re-creative imagination that is capable of reconstructing the images which the original artist has brought into being."

We may say that Keats never really wavered in his belief that the highest kind of poetry was the vehicle of the highest kind of truth, and as such the supreme benefit that could be conferred upon humanity at large.

The humanitarian note :

As time passed, his conception of beauty widened and deepened. He became less aesthetic and more humanitarian, and now his entire endeavour was to pass physical appreciation of beauty. for a deeperanp humanitarian understanding of the principle of beauty. Once he had expressed the desire :

Yes, I must pass them for a nobler life
Where I may find the agonies, the strife of human heart.

This desire of the poet was consummated in the two poems *Why did I laugh to-night?* and *One Fame*, and these two poems must be read for understanding the nature of truth and beauty. In 'Why did I laugh to night?' the humanitarian note is struck going beyond the mere physical appreciation of beauty :

Yet could I on this very midnight cease
And the world's gaudy ensigns she in shreds
Verse, Fame and Beauty or intense indeed.
But Death intener Death is life's meed.

In the poem *On Fame* he states :

How fever'd is that man who cannot look
Upon his mortals days with temperate blood
Who vexes over the leaves of his life's bl. od
And robs his fair name of its maidenhood.

At the end he instructively asks :

Why then should man, teasing the world for grace
Spoil his salvation for a fierce miscreed,

Keats moved a step ahead from this philosophic and humanitarian aspect of beauty, when in *Hyperion* he declared :

For it's the eternal law
That first in beauty should be first in might.

Beauty allied with Power

Beauty is now endowed with power by the poet. Stopford A. Brooke while commenting on this principle writes, "Where there is the highest beauty there is of necessity the greatest power. It is instinct of all spirits to bow unquestioning to beauty if they have the heart to see it. This is Keats' second law. The first is that truth and beauty are one. Yet the two laws are one law. For Beauty is the form that truth takes its eternal Logos. That was the last thought of Keats upon the matter—truth, beauty and power—a co-equal trinity. It was no small thing to have perceived the necessary relation of truth and of both with power and joy."

Keats' adoration of physical and philosophic aspects of Beauty

Keats remained throughout his life a great adorer and worshipper of beauty in its many-fold aspects. He took pride in being a votary of beauty. "If I should die" he wrote, "I have left no immortal work behind me—nothing to make my friends proud of my memory; but I have loved the principle of beauty in all things, and if I had time, I would have made myself remembered." "It is no small thing" says Matthew Arnold, "to have so loved the principle of Beauty as to perceive the necessary relation of beauty with truth and of both with joy."

Q. 14. In the light of Keats' theory of poetry, comment on his 'escapism' and 'aloofness'.

Ans. Keats as an artist

Keats was a conscious artist. He formulated his views about the nature, function and place of poetry, and expatiated on the role of the poet in human society. Unlike Wordsworth who made poetry instrument for moral and spiritual teaching, unlike Shelley who employed poetry for effecting reforms in society infected with a thousand maladies, unlike Byron who used poetry for satire and castigating the foibles and follies of erring human beings, Keats conceived of poetry from the standpoint of a pure artist, and refrained from making poetry an instrument of moral teaching and spiritual edification, a handmaiden for social regeneration, and a weapon for scathing criticism of the evils running rampant in the society. For Keats poetry was a vision of delight, and an expression of the poet's soul in a state of animation. Hence he disapproved the idea that poetry should be made an instrument fot the propagation of this or that doctrine, or be an agent of a social reformer. According to Keats poetry was not required to enforce particular doctrines, nor to contend in the field of reason. Its proper organ was the imagination, and its ultimate aim was the creation of beauty, by going as close as possible to Nature, the perennial source of poetry.

Keats disliked didactic poetry

"We hate poetry" he wrote to Reynolds, "that has a palpable design on us. Poetry should be great and unobtrusive, a thing which enters into one's soul, and does not startle it or amaze it with itself, but with its subjects." Keats believed that poetry should not be allied to politics or sociology, nor should it be a medium for anything except artistic delight to the senses. Poetry should come as naturally to the poet as leaves to a tree, and the poet should revel in his poetic creation, 'whether he creates an Iago or an Imogen.' The poet should create sight and scenes of beauty and loveliness, for that he should go to Nature, the home of poetry and beauty :

For what has made the sage or poet write
But the fair paradise of Nature's light ?

As for Wordsworth so also Keats all beautiful things lay out of doors :

No one who once the glorious sun has seen
And all the clouds, and felt his bosom clean
For his great Maker's presence, but must know
What 'tis I mean, and feel his being glow.

Keats' sensuous appeal

Poetry is the natural song of rejoicing which springs from the heart in response of Nature, and so Keats in his earlier conception of poetry restricted it merely to the creation of beauty and loveliness by delineating the lovely sights and scenes of Nature to provide artistic feast to the senses. He advocated luxuriance of fine figures in the presentation of poetic thought, and stated that 'poetry should surprise us by a fine excess.'

Keats favoured poetry's concern with life

As Keats advanced in his view of art and poetry, he introduced some modification in earlier theory and view of poetry. He was now dissatisfied with mere sights of loveliness and luxuriance created by the poet, and he thought that poetry should not be completely detached from life and humanity, but must voice the hopes and aspirations. sorrows and sufferings of human life. He wondered whether he could give up the sensuous ecstasies, but realised in the same breath that they were only a stage in the higher progress of life. So Keats wrote in 'Sleep and Poetry' :

And can I ever bid these joys farewell ?
Yes, I must pass them for a nobler life
Where I may find the agonies, the strife of human hearts.

For

None can usurp this height
But those to whom the miseries of the world
Are misery, and will not let them rest.

He considered, to quote Hough, "that Art should purify and elevate the Nature that it comprehends, and that the ideal loses nothing of its truth by aiming at perfection of form as well as of idea. Neither did he like to disregard poetry as a matter of study and anxiety or as representative of the struggles and troubles of the mind and heart of man." Now Keats realised that poetry should have in its pale the sorrows and sufferings of humanity and the great end of poetry :

Should be a friend
To sooth the cares and lift the thoughts of men.

The highest kind of poetry is allied with 'truth'

Keats further advanced in his view of poetry and considered that highest kind of poetry was the vehicle of the highest kind of truth, and as such the supreme benefit that could be conferred upon humanity at large. "This highest kind of poetry, Keats felt, called for great sacrifice and demanded great suffering. It is only half with exhilaration and half with foreboding that he decides upon his self dedication to the inexorable good of poetic truth."

As time passed Keats became more and more interested in his search after truth and his aim became to find out the kinship between poetry and philosophy. He began to consider that a great poet must be a great thinker, and a great prophet. In 'Hyperion' he distinguished a poet from an idle dreamer, and placed the poet on a higher level than dreamers and fanatics :

The poet and the dreamer are distinct
Diverse, sheer opposite, antipodes :
The one pours the balm upon the world
The other vexes it.

The fanatics have their dreams for their sects but the poet's visions are for the whole world :

Fanatics have their dreams, where with they weave
A paradise for a sect
For poesy alone can tell her dreams
With the find spell of words
Alone can save imagination from the sable
plain and dumb enchantment.

The poet as the creative visionary

Keats considered the poet as the creative visionary and distinguished him from the pure dreamer who 'vexed' the world with his idle dreams which could not be realized. The poet's dreams were of a higher order and included in their orbit the good of mankind. The poet was to be soother of humanity.

The need of imagination in poetry

To realise his visions the poet in Keats' view must have imagination because it was through imagination that he could realise the vision of his life. The poet's dreams should be realised for the well-being of humanity through the power of imagination. Imagination reigned supreme during the Elizabethan period, but England had been a renegade to this great tradition during the classical period when :

a sham
Nurtured by foppery and barbarism
Made great Appolo blush for this his land.

It was necessary to revive imagination among the poets of his age, for it was only by the salvaging power of creative imagination that the well-being of humanity could be brought about.

Keats' theory of poetry as exemplified in his poetry

The poetry of Keats very well conforms to his well developed theory of poetry. In his early attempts, particularly in *Sleep and Poetry* and *Endymion* was find an aloofness in Keats from the worries and anxieties of the world. 'In these poems there is

certainly an 'escape' from the stern realities of life. "The poetry of Keats" says Courthope, "exhibits the progressive efforts of a man of powerful genius to create for his imagination an ideal atmosphere; unaffected by the social influences of his age." Referring to this note of aloofness from the political, social, and revolutionary life of his times in Keats' poetry Stopford A. Brooke points out, "All the poets of Keats' own time were influenced by the political and social aims which were forced into actuality by the French Revolution. The ideas that awoke the youthful passion of Wordsworth, of Coleridge, that stirred the wrath of Scott, that worked like yeast in Byron and brought-forth new matter, that Shelley reclothed and made in a prophecy of the future—the excitement, the turmoil, the life and death struggle, which gathered round the Revolution—were ignored and unrepresented by Keats. Their poetry spoke of man and his destiny, and his wrongs, his rights, duties and hopes. But in Keats the ideas of the Revolution have disappeared. He has, in spite of a few passages, on vital interests in the present, none in man as a whole, none in the political movement of human thought, none in the future of mankind, none in liberty, equality or fraternity, no interest in anything but beauty. And of all the religious and theological questions of the lives of the poor, of education and class divisions, of the nature of the soul and whence it derived truth, of its relation of the nature world, of duty to our fellowmen—question which one and all were vital to Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron and Shelley, and afterwards to Tennyson, Browning and Arnold, which though, not discussed as doctrines, yet water like rivers all the landscape of their work—there is, in spite of a few vague aspiration, not one solitary trace in Keats. It is not that they are consciously laid, it is, as if, they had never existed in the world."

"Once, in his first volume, he hopes in poetry, to find the agonies, the strife of human hearts, but the hope has no result in his work. Then later on, it seems to occur to him that he is living in a world of fevered thought and pain. It was so when he wrote upon the Nightingale, for a vague he art ache to beat him, and he relised that world was troubled. But then his impulse was to fly from it all, to drink of Hippocrene, and leave the world unseen, and with the nightingale fade away into the forest dim. That was his temper and this is strange new position of Keats, as a Poet, in relation to the impulse of Revolution. The impulse is seen in Keats."

The above statement of S.A. Brooke applies not to the entire poetic production ofKeats, but only to a few of his early poem and odes. As a matter of fact the criticism can broadly apply to everything that Keats wrote, for in his poetic truth there was no scope for propaganda or revolutionary enthusiasm, but truly speaking the criticism fitly applies of Keats' immature works. In them he, no doubt, escapes and keeps aloof from the stern realities of life. He revels in Greek legends and beautiful descriptions of

nature, He goes to the Middle Ages and the old Pagan times. He weaves a wed of romance and colours his works with a romantic ardour. But that is the whole truth about Keats. At one stage of his life he was himself disguste l with the world of flora and old Pan that he depicted and wanted to go to a world where he "may find the agonies, the strife. of human hearts" He did actually strive to write about tales affecting human lives and their destiny. In the *Eve of St. Agnes* and *Ode to Psyche*, the human touch is clearly present, and the desire of the poet not to remain aloof from humanity is struck. Keats is not wholly absorbed in the realm of Flora and Pan, but seeks to emerge from it. and come in grip with the vital realities of life, particularly in *Hyperion—A Vision*. Hence in spite of a general aloofness in Keats' poetry from the rigid and stern realities of the world, we find his earnest desire to mix and move with his fellowmen and sound the depths of their agonies and sorrows. He is not complete escapist and knows full well that :

The fancy cannot cheat so well
As she is famed to do deceiving elf.

In defence of Keafs Garrod writes. "Only in that world of beauty and imagination, let me say and at once, does Keats move easily, with the divine ease of poetry But that it was the world that he wanted or that he always wanted, that he was wholly happy to be there, that he was not perpetually scheming out of it, I am not persuaded. After all, what may be called his last act in poetry was a throw to *Hyperion* to the rubbish heap ; to substitute for it *Hyperion* : *A Vision* ; and in the *Vision* to speak the condemnation of everything in his poetry which had preceded it."

In the prologue to the *Vision* no one, we are told plainly, can usurp the height of poetry who does not draw his strength, from social suffering :

None can usurp this height, returned the shade,
But those to whom the miseries of the world
Are misery, and will not let them rest.

The shade even uses plainer language. Thou art a dreaming thing, says Moneta, addressing the poet himself :

Thou art a dreaming thing
The fever of thyself, think of the earth.

For thinking of the earth Keats had, in fact, small aptitude ; for it was an earth peopled only by flowers and the scent of flowers, for men and women whose nature was that of flowers and scents. And yet, more fully I think than we realise, he shared with the poets, his contemporaries, the revolutionary conscience ; and this

is the last word it is, not, I think, his truest word, but his last word upon office of the poet."

Q. 15. "Keats spoke of his name as 'writ in water. Posterity has agreed with him that it is—but in the water of life'. (Saintsbury)—Discuss.

Or

Comment on the statement : "In spite of his transcendent genius Keats never was or ever will be a popular poet." Discuss the remark of Shelley in his letter to Joseph Severn.

Or

Write a note on Keats as an Artist.

Ans. Shelley's criticism of Keats' poetry

Shelley, in one of his letters to Joseph Severn wrote, 'In spite of his transcendent genius Keats never was or ever will be popular poet.' By dubbing Keats as a poet not likely to be popular, he was just referring to the absence of revolutionary enthusiasm, of passionate urge to demolish the effete social conventions, a yearning for an utopian, world where man could live with freedom and ease, and a complete aloofness from the fever and fret of human life. Shelley thought that if a poet wanted to be popular it was necessary for him to deal with popular social problems in his poetry, and present pathetically p ures of sorrows and sufferings in which ordinary human-beings were drowned. A poet could be popular with his fellow-men if he became their spokesman and voiced their hopes and aspirations in a language which they could understand, and in a manner which they could follow. In the poet introduced a plethora of classical allusions and references in his poetry and made his poetry obscure for the common man by learned references to ancient m thology he could not hope to be popular.

Keats is popular with lovers of art, beauty and poetry

Keats was certainly not the popular poet in which Shelley conceived him to be. But the word 'popular' need not be used in that narrow sense of a progressive poet interested only in the expression of the problem of the bread or the removal of tyranny, kingly glare, priests and warriors from human society. A poet can be popular even though he may not be a rebel, a reformer and an idealist, If he is not popular with a few earth-eyed people interested in nothing else except their mundane problems, he can certainly be popular with heaveneyed adorers of nobler values and higher considerations of ert, With the lovers of art, poetry, beauty'

Keats will perhaps be more popular than Shelley, and in every generation for all times to come, Keats will find a host of admirers eulogising his art and recognising him as a great poet living close in the vicinity of the mighty Shakespeare, the supreme artist for all times to come.

Keats' poetry is not of ephemeral character

It was Keats' humility and utmost modesty that he considered his poetic production of an ephemeral character not likely to interest mankind in the future. He thought that his name was written on water, which meant that his name was likely to be wiped out and effaced from the memory of men as the waves from the sea. But he was erring on the wrong side, for at least for more than one hundred years the name of the poet has not been obliterated, and in every generation he has been placed high in the rank of the romantic poets of his age. Saintsbury is fully justified in pointing out that his name has been written on the water of life. Life is a continuous process and though a few sentient creatures may die every year, yet the flow of the stream of life goes unabated. Similarly the name of Keats written on the water of life flow on with the endless stream of time, and never will Keats, the pure poet and artist, be thrown into the limbo of oblivion. He will live for ever like Shakespeare and his name and poetry will be adored so long as the English language, in which he couched his poems, will last. The stream of time that washes the fabrics of weaker poets will pass quietly by the adamant of Keats without doing any injury to his name and fame.

Keats is a pure poet and a superb artist

Why after all is Keats' name written in the water of life and what are his charms to be recognised as a great poet by the future generations? Keats' claim to the reverence of the future ages to come lies in his being a pure poet and a superb artist in poetry. He will be honoured, appreciated and admired, for all the Romantic poets, he was the only one who kept alive the claims of art above all other earthly considerations. He did not make poetry as an instrument of propaganda or an agent of social reformers. Poetry for him had no mission save to minister to the sensuous as well as philosophical instincts of man. "We hate poetry" Keat wrote to Reynolds, "that has a palpable design upon us. Poetry should be great and unobtrusive, a thing which enters into one's soul and does not startle it or amaze it with itself but with its subjects" Keats was a supreme artist in poetry and his place is ensured in the gallery of renowned English poets for keeping alive the claim of art at a time when the water of revolutionary idealism were threatening to engulf the citadel of Art.

Keats' delight in beauty, nature and mythology

Keats did not deal with the stern and rigid realities of life which have a temporary bearing and soon lose their interest, but with beauty, nature, mythology, all in a language which artists have adored and in a musical style which has stirred the chords of the human hearts. We care for Keats, for his poetry at least provides us an escape and a refuge from the fever and fret of the world. Here is a poet to whom we can go for imaginative recreation and artistic joy at a time when we are clouded by the shadow of carking cares and corroding anxieties of the world. The tales of Keats in 'Endymion,' 'Lamia,' 'Isabella', 'Eve of St. Agnes' can provide us a temporary relief from the weariness of the world. Moving in Keats' world of Satyrs, Tritons, Nereids and the world of romantic knights and fair slim damsels we can at least forget for the time being the oppression of time and the weary weight of hours.

Keats' adoration of beauty

Keats created beauty in his poetry and to lovers of beauty his poetry will provide an epicurean feast of delight. Is there a man who is not fascinated by beauty ? Keats is the poet of beauty and he has left behind lovely and charming pictures of beauty—the beauty of woman, the beauty of nature, and beauty of sorrow.

Keats' love of Nature

Keats loved Nature and his poetry is replete with beautiful descriptions of Nature, The claims of Keats to be recognised as a great poet lie in his appreciation and presentation of the beautiful description of nature. The poet was fascinated by the varying moods, forms and shapes of nature. His whole body and soul were tremulous with delight before the sights and scenes of nature. He loved Nature just for its own sake and for 'the glory and loveliness' that is everywhere found in it. He wrote, "The setting sun will always set me to right, or if a sparrow were before my window, I take part in its existence and pick about the gravel." His friend Haydon said that for Keats joy was in the setting sun and the humming of bees. His nature trembled before their presence. A greet poet of nature would always be remembered for his pictures of nature's loveliness.

Keats' use of imagination

Keats was a superb artist in the use of imagination for the creation of beautiful things. To an artist imagination always has a special appeal. Keats uses imagination effectively in the service of poetry. To him poetry was a world of imagination only. It was a realm of enchantment where only those mighty dwell who saw visions and dreamt dreams.

Keats' as a pictorial artist

Keats provided the finest feast to the senses by his pictorial art. As painter of vivid pictures in all their luxurious details there was perhaps no greater artist than Keats. His vivid pictures of nature and human life are masterpieces, and in a few words he managed to provide a finished picture. He used 'colour' in his pictorial presentations with the rarest skill of a consummate artist. His originality as a pictorial artist lay in his description of purely physical states, such as weariness' thirst languor and drowsiness. His sensuous pictures rise distinct and round like the relief upon a shield. His pictures are so perfect in words that they can inspire an artist with brush to paint them in full.

Keats' phraseology

Keats' phrases are superb and in the rounded felicity of his phrases he was very near to Shakespeare. Keats' poetry was Shakespearean, as Arnold says, "No imitative, indeed of Shakespeare, but Shakespearean, because its expression has that rounded perfection and felicity of loveliness of which Shakespeare is the great master." His poetry is full of phrases which simply haunt the imagination by virtue of their aptness and their musical qualities. No one can forge 'nature's patient, sleepless Eremite', spoken of a solitary star sparkling in the sky or again 'light winged Dryad of the trees' in which he addresses the nightingale or again the most apt phrase—'Sweet peas on a tip-toe for flight'. Referring to Keats' mastery of phraseology Bridges once remarked, "I mean the power of concentrating all the far-reaching resources of language on one point so that a single and apparently effortless expression rejoices the aesthetic imagination at the moment when it is most expectant and exacting, and at the same time astonishes the intellect with a new aspect of truth."

Keats' Imagery

Keats as an artist "surprises us by the fine excess of his imagery. He weaves a fabric of phrase wonderful for its colour and beauty. He cannot write without making pictures with his words and every picture has its own atmosphere. The pictures of Keats are all aglow with colour, not always very accurate painter's colour, but colour which captivates or overwhelms the senses."

Keats' poetic diction

"Keats quite consciously uses language as Spenser and the Elizabethans and Milton had used it, as one who is free of it, not confined to the language of the age, but at liberty to revive old words that have taken one's fancy, to coin words, and not only, like all poets, fresh compounds but epithets and verbs, to make verbs of nouns and nouns of verbs free of the order of words, the epithet's after the noun etc., etc."

As an Artist

Keats will always be remembered, admired and adored, for he is an artist, and another artist of his calibre was not produced in the galaxy of English poets, till Tennyson, who gave to his readers the same artistic delight which Keats had provided in his *Endymion*, *Lamia*, *Hyperion* and the *Odes*.

Q. 16. Write an essay on the Nature poetry of Keats.

Ans. Keats as a great lover of Nature

Keats was one of the greatest lovers and admirers of Nature and in his poetry we come across exquisitely beautiful descriptions of the wonderful sights and scenes of Nature just for its own sake and for the 'glory and loveliness' that is everywhere found in it. "Keats" says Compton-Rickett, "had no religion save the religion of beauty, no God save Pan; the Earth was his great consoler, and so passionately did he love her, with a love far more concrete and personal than that of Wordsworth or even Shelley that no other consideration impinges upon his work." Keats' sympathy with nature was not of the reflective and ethical order, drawing food for moral inspiration and spiritual edification. He did not philosophise upon the phenomena around him. "With an intense and passionate simplicity, holding, as it were, his breath with wonder and delight, he seeks to know Nature perfectly and to enjoy her fully with no ulterior end or other thought than to give her complete expression. He loves her purely for her own sake and paints her not with the reason but with imagination." "Whereas Wordsworth spiritualises and Shelley intellectualises Nature" says Compton-Rickett, "Keats is content to express her through the senses. The colour, the sound, the touch, the pulsating music—these are the things that stir him to his depths. There is not a mood of earth he does not love, not a season that will not cheer and inspire him." Keats' love for nature was purely sensuous and he loved the beautiful sights and scenes of nature for their own sake and 'less for the sake of sympathy which the human mind can read into her with its own working and aspirations.' His love of nature had not a tinge of mysticism about it. Nature bore no spiritual messages for him, as it did for Wordsworth, nor did he seek any moral inspiration from the beauties of nature. He was tremblous with delight at the feast of nature and its music delighted his ears. He viewed nature like an objective observer and painted its beauties in a picturesque and pictorial manner. He cared only for 'the beauty of earth that was never dead.' Rightly, therefore, Haydon pointed out, "He was in his glory in the fields. The humming of the bee, the sight of the flower, the glitter of the sun seemed to make his nature tremble." The poet himself wrote

to a friend in one of his letters, "Nothing startles me beyond the moment. The setting sun will always set me to right, or if a sparrow were before my window, I take part in its existence and pick about the gravel." He was wholly in the place and in the time, and with the things of which he wrote, not confused by the thought of how the trees would look in winter if he saw them in spring and how the clouds in the sky might be arranged tomorrow; still less confused by any imputation of his own feelings to nature." He always appreciated Nature in her present state without brooding sorrowfully over the past glories nor anticipating the joys of nature in the furure. "Where are the songs of spring ? He fancied that some one asked, "And where are they ?" Keats, the lover of the moment in nature, answered, "Think not of them, thou has the music too."

Scenes and sights of Nature

In the early poems of Keats, we come across fine descripti ns and charming pictures of nature. In 'Sleep and Poetry' and 'Endymion' the poet paints nature with the skill of a consummate artist. His first poem 'I stood tip-toe upon a little hill' opens with a beautiful and lovely description of an early summer's day. The poet finds in nature the perennial source of poetry. In 'Sleep and Poetry', the thought is further developed and here Keats felt that poetry was the natural song of rejoicing that sprang from the heart in response to Nature :

No one who once the glorious sun has seen
And all the clouds, and felt his bosom clean
For his great maker's presence, but must know
What 'its I mean, and feel his being glow.

Sensuous pleasure in the beauties of Nature

"In these early poems" says Stopford Brooke, "it was a temper in Keats of unruffled pleasure, a sensitive girl like sensuous pleasure, in beauty, and in the consolation of beauty to the soul; a pleasure which loved also to have the body comfortable while the soul enjoyed, so that all things might be in harmony. It was also a temper in which freed from the religious and philosophical troubles, men could play with nature. He had a way of fluttering in a butterfly fashion from one object to another, and touch for the moment the momentary charm of each thing." This mood of rapture in the presence of the beauties of Nature is reflected in several descriptions and is best seen in the 'Ode to Autumn' where a complete picture of the autumn season is presented with a minuteness of detail that does credit to the poet's imagination and vivid observation of nature. He showed with the Greeks the instinct for personifying the power of nature in this ode and the picture of the season is presented through a series of vivid personifications such as :

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store ?
Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind.

Sensitiveness in Keats' treatment of Nature

Keats exhibited a wonderful sensitiveness in the treatment of nature, All his sense organs, such as eyes, ears, nose and touch were always alive to carry the impressions to his mind and through it to the soul. He felt a feeling of joy in his sensitivity to nature. He identified the highest works of Art with nature and to him art and nature gave the same joy. Beauty of art for him was nothing else than the beauty of nature which had passed through the brain of the artist.

No scientific analysis of the aspects of Nature

Keats like Wordsworth had no place for 'meddling intellect' in the appreciation and understanding of nature. Analysis of the objects of nature could give no joy. He complained in '*Lamia*' that analysis spoilt the beauty and charm of nature :

There was an awful rainbow once in heaven,
We know her woof, her texture; she is given
In the dull catalogue of common things.

Keats believed in coming to Nature with a 'heart that watches and receives.' The bird's song can be appreciated only if one listens to it without a feeling for knowledge or scientific analysis :

O fret not after knowledge, I have none
And yet my song comes natural with the warmth
O fret not after knowledge, I have none
And yet the evening listens.

Relationship in humanity and nature

Keats conceived that the relation of humanity and nature was one of sympathy and intimate relationship. It was the realization of the close bond of relationship between nature and men which enabled him to endow the figures of the reaper, the gleaner and the maiden at the cider press with the whole spirit of Autumn.

Sorrow and despair in Keats' treatment of Nature

Sometimes Keats' note of happiness towards nature was coloured by sorrow and despair. When he had finished *Endymion*, when the troubles of the world had come upon him, when he had seen his brother die, and felt himself that life was ill-made for him, his note towards nature changed It was mixed with sorrow, but it was sorrow which was impassioned to lose itself in joy which remembered the time of self-forgetfulness and urged him to escape.

'Leave me behind' cries sorrow, 'escape from your life into joy'. "And Keats obeys; flies to nature and her loveliness and for a time succeeds in forgetting; then the note of pain falls again, and again he forgets it, and again remembers, and again forgets:—till the alternating passion is worn out and all the mixed music dies."

Nature as a source of poetry and joy

Keats wished to die into Nature—to 'cease upon the midnight with no pains', but this was not his ordinary mood. It was rather the characteristic mood of Shelley. Keats sought, in spite of such moments of pain, to live in nature and to be incorporated with one beautiful thing after another. He had a way of fluttering, butterfly-fashion from one object to another, touching for the moment the charm of each thing—the work of fancy 'who is never at home.' For Keats, Nature remained a perennial source of poetry and joy :

For what had made the sage or poet, write
But this fair paradise of Nature's light ?

Q.17. What is the meaning of negative capability in Keats' poetry ? How far is it present in his poetry ?

Ans. Meaning of Negative capability

Negative capability is considered by Keats as an essential property of the poet. It refers to the capacity of the poet to keep himself away from the hold of 'irritable reaching after fact and reason'. In the words of William Alsh, "Keats gave an essential property of the poet 'negative capability' that is, when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason."

Negative capability in Keats' poetry

In Keats' poetry there is enough of negative capability, particutarly in the *Ode to Indolence* where the poet is in a state of restlessness, uncertainty and doubt. This ode reflects Keats' aversion to action and is an attempt to escape from the rigid realities of the world. In the *Ode to the Grecian Urn* there is again an expression of that capability, and this time the attention of the poet is rivetted on Greek life. The picture of an empty city with its people on their pilgrimage to a shrine is the reflection of the negative capability of the poet. The same spirit finds expression in *Lamia.* The entire poem is an attempt to fly away from philosophy and the scrutinising eyes of science and philosophy. The charm and beauty of Lamia disappear, when she is being exposed to the scathing eyes of the philosopher. The contact with reason brings the disappearance of Lamia, the

beautiful serpent woman. The same spirit of negative capability can be seen in *Endymion*, particularly in the wanderings of the shepherd, and reflections of the spirit are again noticed in *Sleep and Poetry*.

Reaction to negative capability in Keats' later poetry

In the later part of his life Keats presented a reaction to negative capability particularly when he asserted that no one who seeks to escape from the world can get to the pinnacle of poetic heights. Keats read Cary's translation of the *Divine Comedy* and with that in mind and ear he began an introduction to the poem which was to make not a Miltonic epic, but a vision of life to which none might have access but those :

To whon the miseries of the world
Are misery and will not le' them rest.

Later on Keats began to have a higher vision that transcended the earlier phase of negative capability. Keats put before himself some higher tasks to achieve than merely telling stories or moving in the world of flora and fauna. Instead of losing himself in fanciful tales of 'heart–easing things' the poet realised :

Yes, I must pass them for a nobler life
Where I may find the agonies, the strife
Of human hearts.

Keats' early poetry no doubt presents possibilities of negative capability, but he would certainly have transbounded this early limitation on his art if he had survived for a few years more. His development, as far as the aesthetic side, was complete. He had luxuriated enough in fine excess in the world of nature, art, music, and myths. He was gradually coming to grips with reality and facing the problems of life. When he was just entering the second and more important phase of his development as a poet he was abruptly cut short by death, and an artist of the higher order was lost to the world.

4.

Shelley

Q. 18. Give your estimate of Shelley as a lyrical poet. Are we justified in describing him as impassioned but vague ?

Ans. A lyric defined

A lyric has been defined as "the product of swift momentary and passionate impulse coming from without for the most part, suddenly a waking the poet, as it were, out of a dream into vivid life, seizing upon him and setting him on fire with its graps, until he believes his very self which speaks-replacing that is, the poet's own life of the impulse, until the impulse, has absorbed in him every thing else but-itself." When a lyric rises into from in a great poet, it is in fire that it rises.

Shelley as a true lyric poet

Shelley's temperament was peculiarly responsive to lyrical impulses. His intensely imaginative and sensitive nature was aptly fitted for the lyric, and into lyrics, both personal and impersonal he poured the best of his poetic genius. Shelley's soul came out in his lyrics. His heart flowed out in his songs. His very personality melted out in his song, until he ceased to be a man and 'become a voice, a lyric incarnate.' With his keen ardour of passion eager, sensitiveness of personal sorrow. Shelley could not be anything else except a lyric poet. A. C. Bradley maintains that Milton, Wordsworth and Keats are no match to Shelley in lyricism. He says, "Where a full-toned, slow-moving rhythm is wanted, Keats surpasses Shelley and Keats at his best does so also, as Milton and Wordsworth certainly do in feeling for the moment of a sonnet. But to attempt, in general, to put Keats besides him as a lyric poet appears to me an error almost grotesque, and to put Milton or Wordsworth beside him is still an error." Symons, comparing Shelley to the other romantic poets, gives to Shelley the highest place as a lyricist. He says, "In none of Shelley's greatest contemporaries was the lyrical faculty so paramount and whether we consider his minor songs, his odes, or his more complicated choral dramas, we acknowledge that he was the loftiest and the most spontaneous singer in our language." Ernest Rhys, endorsing the views of Symons concerning Shelley's supremacy as a lyric poet writes, "Among the lyric poets, Shelley, who was a lyric poet before everything, needs no longer to have his claim reaffirmed." Prof. Elton says—"Shelley's genius was essentially lyrical. All his poetry is really lyrical, for his lyrical impulse penetrates into even his unlyrical verse."

Lyrics of Shelley

Though the lyrical strain is present in almost all the longer poems of Shelley—*Prince Athanes, The Witch of Atlas, Rosalind and Helen, Alastor, Epipsychidion* and *Prometheus Unbound*, yet it is in the smaller poems of lyricism that we find Shelley, at his best. Among the lyrics of Shelley, shorter in length and bewitching in their charm, the pride of place ought to be given to the following lyrics—*Ode to the West Wind, Cloud, Skylark, Lines Written among the Engene Hills, Stanzas Written in Dejection near Naples, Word's Wonderers. Music When Soft Voices Die; The Flower That Smiles to-day, Rarely, Rarely Comost Thou, Lament, O world ! O Life ! O Time ! Invitation and the Recollection.* These lyrics of Shelley contain in the words of Saintsbury, "things absolutely consummate, absolutely unsurpassed, only by a few other things as perfect as themselves." "Their perfection lies," says Cowling "in the absolute fusions of imagery and rhythm in a diction which is almost musical. Their intensity is partly the vividness of Shelley's vision, partly the emphasis of impetuous soul. They produce a phantasmagoria of visual images, dissolved and reappearing with a swiftness which contributed in part by the flowing current of rhythm."

Range and variety of lyrics

The lyrics of Shelley admit of a wide range and variety. His lyrics are both impersonal and personal. Some of them are written on the subject of love, while others are on Nature, Regeneration of mankind' and the state of life in the future form the subject matter of some of his lyrics. In short, Shelley's lyrics deal with the poet's own personal life of nature and the life of humanity in the present and the future under the impress of love. The following are the main features and qualities of Shelley's lyrics :

Spontaneity

Shelley's lyrics are marked with a note of spontaneity. They seem to come direct from the poet's heart. There is absolute effortlessness in them. There is no laboured artistry and studied deliberation in his lyrics. "Shelley exhaled verse as a flower exhales fragrance. The essentiall point is that there was no effort or laborious artistry about it at any time.

Music

Shelley's lyrics are extremely melodious and the rapture of song enlivens each one of them. The *Skylark* is a triumph of musical harmony and the melody of the poem rings in our ears. Each stanza of this melodious lyric can be sung to perfection. It is because of the musical quality of the lyrics that Shelley has been called a 'perfect singing god' by Swinburne. who himself was a great matser of song and melody in verse. Sh[illegible]

art of combining the quality of music with the outer rhythm of the verse and the inner rhythm of thought and imagery.

Referring to the musical note in Shelley's lyrics Lauri Magnus says, "Shelley's strength lies in his music far more than in his thought, as his best work is to be sought in the occasional lyric poems, in which the mere words he uses, melt and are fused in the sound of the melody they contrive to make. The sound of the melody, thus made, is so patent in its magic that it wins its way to our emotions without affecting our senses ; it is not till the emotions have been stored by these melodies, transcending language, that the words, which compose them carry a meaning."

Rush and impetuousity

Shelley's lyrics are gifted with a unique glow of rush and impetuousity. In Shelley the lyric fire burns slowly first, and then it suddenly flares up towards heaven in a rush of flame, gradually coming down, once again, and subsiding as it flamed. It is very much like a meteor vaporised by its own heat. Shelley's poetry is all in a state of hurry. Describing the human race, he writes :

Numerous as gnots upon the evening gleam,
All hastening onward, yet none seemed to know
Was born amid the crowd, as through the sky
One of the million leaves of summer's bier.

Emotional ecstasy

Shelley's lyrics have an emotional ecstasy. The songs of 'Prometheus Unbound' are marked with an emotionl feeling of joy probably at the liberation of man from thraldom. The ecstatic quality of Shelley's lyrics is not a permanent feature since the note of melancholy and despair can equally well be sounded by the poet in his lyrics. The ecstatic note comes out at its best in the lyric 'To Spirit of Delight' where the poet flows out his ecstaticjoy in the address to the Spirit of Delight in the following rapturous lines :

Thou art love and life ! O come
Make once more my heart thy home.

The note of sadness and melancholy

The note of rapture disappears when the poet comes to the presentation of his own life. His autobiographical lyrics are uniformly sad. In the lines 'Written in Dejection near Naples' the poet strikes the melancholic note that touches our heart :

Alas I have nor hope nor health
Nor peace within nor calm around
Nor that content surpassing wealth
Nor fame, nor power, nor love, nor leisure,
Others I see whom these surround.

In his 'Ode to the West Wind' the personal cry becomes very piercing, and the agony of the poet's heart comes out poignantly in the lines :

O lift me as a wave, a leaf. a cloud !
I fall upon the thorns of life I bleed.

The note of personal grief comes out touchingly in the short lyric *O World ! O Life ! O Time !*

Out of the day and night
A joy hast taken flight.
Fresh spring, and summer, and winter hoar
Move my faint heart with grief, but with delight
No more—oh, never maré !

The same feeling is present in *The Indian Serenade* :

Oh lift me from the grass !
I die ! I faint ! I fall !

Intensity

There is a note of intensity in some of the lyrics of Shelley. In the *Ode to the West Wind*, there is a happy fusion and union of lyrical breadth with lyrical intensity. The picture of clouds and the storm brewing in the offing possesses an intensity and vigour rarely to be seen in the milder and softer lyrics of the poet. "There is no song in the whole of English literature more passionate, more penetrative, more full of the force by which the idea and its form are united into one creation as the 'Ode to the West Wind."

Prophetic note and touch of humanism

Some of the impersonal lyrics of Shelley deal with the emancipation of mankind from the tyranny of custom and oppression of tyrants. The note of revolt accompanied with a feeling of regeneration for mankind comes out in the lyrics interspersed in his longer poems. These lyrics are coloured with feelings of liberty, freedom, equality, fraternity and love for mankind. These lyrics will live, for in them is voiced the deepest aspirations of the human heart for freedom afid liberty and brotherhood of mankind. A note of optimism, quite in contrast to the pessimistic strain of the personal poems, is sounded in all these happy poems of regeneration, where we confidently hope for the dawn of the cherished millennium :

O Wind !
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind ?

Vague and Substanceless

A charge of vagueness and substancelessness is brought against Shelley's lyrics. They appear to many as fragments of a

dreamy vision and the idle effusions of a nutopian. Vagueness is produced due to the swift succession of similes and the rush of emotional fervour.

The charge of vagueness in spite of the quick succession of similes and metaphors cannot be levelled against most of the lyrics. *To A Skylark* is an exquisitely charming poem without any vagueness though it is rich in similes and metaphors. In fact, the similes and metaphors clarify the picture of the Skylark. The charge of unsubstantiality is not always true, for in several of the lyrics as 'Ode to the West Wind,' 'To A Skylark,' 'The Sensitive Plant, 'there is a hard core of wisdom. Many observations made by the poet are profound and deep and have a ring of universality about them. The reader will find strains of Platonic philosophy in these poems particularly in 'The Sensitive Plant' where the poet remarks wisely like a philosopher :

For love and beauty, and delight,
There is no death nor change : their might
Exceeds our organs which endure
No light, being themselves obscure.

Simplicity

Rapture and simplicity are the two essential qualities of a lyric. "A lyric is the expression of a passionate ideal and beside being rapturous, pure passion is always simple, whether it be the passion of love, hatred, joy or despair." Shelley's lyrics have this quality of simplicity in a marked degree. In this respect no poet except Burns can stand in comparison to him. Other poets like Wordsworth also have simplicity. "But none have combined with these gifts the two others that have made Shelley's poetry uniquely beautiful—the quality of music and the art of combining the outward rhythm of verse with an inner rhythm of thought and imagery."

The above mentioned points prove that "Shelley's lyricism is incomparable...never was the soul of poet so spontaneously lyrical ...Everything with Shelley is the occasion for a musical stir......... ......Shelley has the gift of lending it the sweetest and most liquid harmonies."

To quote Principal Shairp, "Other lyric poets, it has been said sing what they feel. Shelley in his lyrics sings of what he wants to feel. The thrills of desire, the gushes of emotion are all straining after something distant or future, or they are wails of passionate despair—utter despondency for something hopelessly gone. Yet it must be owned that those bursts of passionate desire after ideal beauty set our pulses a throbbing with a strange vibration even when we do not really share it. Such is the charm of his impassioned eloquence and the witchery of his music."

Q. 19. Write a note on Shelley as a Rebel and a Reformer.

Or

> **"The greater rigour of his nature begot in him a passion for reform and a habit of rebellion which are the inspiration of his longer poems" Discuss.**

Ans A lover of liberty and freedom

Shelley had certain inherent tendencies of character which ultimately made him a rebel and a reformer, a prophet and an idealist in his life. He was from his Eton days a lover of liberty and freedom, and his soul revolted against all forms of tyranny and oppression. The practice of sham religions and morals prevailing in the contemporary society often excited his fragile exterior to fury and revolt. He became a confirmed reble against all the existing institutions and the long cherished conventions and traditions of human society. Shelley's humanitarianism, his love of liberty and hatred of oppression turned him into a rebel against all those established institutions, political, religious and social, which meant to suppress mankind in any part of the world. Thus if we study Shelley's poetry we shall find him raising his strong voice against tyranny and oppression exercised by tyrants over miserable. spineless and poor human beings We shall find the poet rising against statesmen, kings and warriors. We shall hear him thundering against exploitation and denouncing religious priests and unholy preachers. The tone of the poet as a reble assumes a fervour and a vehemence which we scarcely could have hoped to find in a sensitive and girlish type of man that Shelley actually was at Eton. Commenting on the rebellious nature of Shelley, Symons nicely remarks in his famous book on Shelley, "The cardinal characteristic of his nature was an implacable antagonism to shams and conventions. which passed too easily int impatient rejection of established forms as worse than useless. His passionate love of liberty, his loathing for intolerance, his impatience of control for self and others and his vivid logical sincerity combined to make him the quixotic champion of extreme opinions. He had a vital faith in the duty and desirability of overthrowing idols ; faith in the divine beauty of Nature ; faith in a love that rules the universe ; fatih in the perfectability of man."

Queen Mab

The earliest glimpses of Shelley as a rebel are seen in *Queen Mab*. Here he denounces statesmen, priests, warriors with the fury of a grand rebel. Mark his words which emerge lava-like from his infuriated soul :

War is a statesman's game, the priest's delight
The lawyer's jest, the hired assassin's trade,
And to those royal murderers, whose mean thrones

Are brought by crimes of treachery and gore
And bread they eat, the staff on which they lean.

Denouncing the courtiers, Shelley bursts out :

These gilded flies
That basking in the sunshine of a court,
Fatten on its corruption ! wha· are they ?
The drones of the community; they feed
On the mechanic's labour.

In the same poem of righteous fury the poet lashes against all tyrannising powers demanding obedience from freedom loving man:

Power like a desolating pestilence
Pollutes whatever it touches ; and obedience
Bane of all genius, virtue, freedom, truth
Makes slaves of men, and of the human frame
A mechanised automaton.

The wrath of the poet is roused to see the suppressed and crushed life to the poor persons :

Whose life is misery, and fear and care
Who the morn wakens to fruitless toil
Who hears his famished off spring's scream

and the rebels against the rich persons who suck up their blood and exploit them for their personal power and pelf.

The Revolt of Islam

In *The Revolt of Islam* Shelley's purpose was, as h · tells us in the preface, "to kindle in the bosom of his readers a virtuous enthusiasm for those doctrines of liberty and justice, that faith and hope in something good which neither violence nor misrepresentation nor prejudice can ever wholly extinguish among mankind. The subject matter of this stirring poem of rebellion is the liberation of mankind from bondage by the power of thought, love and beauty as symbolised by Laon and Cythna's 'Liberation of the Golden Cit·'. The hero of this poem is a youth inspired by revolutionary fire to bring an end of tyranny and usher in the reign of freedom of thought and liberty to mankind". The hero and the heroine are animated with a deep love of virtue and a strong desire to confer the boons of political and intellectual freedom on their fellow human-beings. Laon fights the Turks for the freedom of his country, and like Promethus, he is bound on a rock and is left to meet his end in hunger and despair. He is set at liberty along with Cythna by a hermit. Laon frees the city of the tyrant. However the tyrant plays some trick on the heroine, and both Laon and Cythna are burnt on a pyre. They are defeated at the end but their struggle to end tyranny is meaningful. On the whole, Shelley's object in this poem is to oppose the selfish and the strong :

That still tyrannise
Without reproach and check.

Prometheus Unbound

In *Prometheus Unbound* the note of rebellion is further struck with forceful vigour. Prometheus is a rebel like Shelley himself and his character is the embodiment of all that is good in suffering humanity. Jupiter is the tyrant crushing humanity under his iron heel. The revolt of Prometheus against the power of tyranical Jupiter is, in fact, the revolt of Shelley himself against the tyranny of ruling monarchs. Prometheus in Aeschylus's drama is depicted as defying, and then, at last, being stricken down. Shelley's Prometheus is a successful rebel against the power of Jupiter since he brings about his dethronement from the tyrannical seat of power. Prometheus is helped by Demogorgon and it is Demogorgon who 'overthrows Jupiter. The rebel Prometheus is assisted by a second, for Shelley's "heroes are either successful through the intervention of some outward agencies or they perish" Prometheus, the Titan, is a symbol of mankind struggling for perfection and Jupiter is the embodiment of traditional beliefs and institutions dominating as evil in our universe. The triumph of Prometheus is the triumph of the rebel over the forces of tyranny.

Against priests and church

Shelley's revolt against priests and churches is fervently expressed in 'Queen Mab' as in 'Prometheus Unbound'. The Jehovah of the Bible not merely repudiated by us as an object of worship, but is condemned as an evil deity and the worst type of moral evil. Superstitions of religion and dogmas of historical Christianity alike meet their condemnation at the hand of the poet.

As A Reformer

Shelley was not only a rebel, but also a reformer of the evils that he attacked in his poems. He sought to reform the existing order of things in preparation for the attainment of his ideal. He put forth sound suggestions in all branches of our diversified life, and he pictured the world free from the evils that tarred it. The theme of his poems is the contrast between the world as it is, and the world as it ought to be. He had his eyes on the future, and visualised the picture of a world reformed of all existing evils. "To renovate the world, to bring about utopia," says Compton Rickett, "is his constant aim, and for this reason we may regard Shelley as emphatically the poet of eagear sensitive youth, not the animal youth of Byron, but the spiritual youth of the visionary and reformer." To quote Hudson, "Dreamer of dreams as he was, Shelley yet conceived it to be part of his poetic mission to become the inspirer and guide of man. He had, as he confessed, a passion for reforming the world and this passion blazes out again and again in his poetry."

Shelley's method of reformation

Shelley's method of reformation was to direct the attention of the reformers to an idealised picture of the world. He pointed out in 'Prometheus Unbound,' "My purpose has hither to been simply to familiarise highly refined imagination of the more select classes of poetical readers with beautiful idealism of moral excellence." Shelley made his appeal of reform not to the masses of the people but to the highly refined imagination of his select poetical readers. The number of people who were to carry forward Shelley's crushing zeal were few in number. Shelley hoped to stir in the first instance only those in whom the fire of goodness, beauty and love burned in an intenser degree. Later on the message could be carried forward by the people. Shelley's reform ative movement was, thus, well planned. Beginning as a rivulet rising among the elite in the world of poetry and art, it was likely to expand in its march from the high hills to the plains. Shelley wanted that the world should be free from the domination and control of tyrants, oppressive and despotic rulers, and human-beings should breathe freely in an atmosphere of freedom undaunted by the scowling looks and frowning eyes of tyrannical lords. He desired that the dignity of the individual soul and human personality be maintained. He fervently pleaded that the toilers and workers in the fields and factories should get their just dues, rather than be exploited by landlords and capitalists. He sought to usher in an arder of society in which equality, liberty and justice would be the watchwords of social life. He was for the socialistic pattern of society without the attending evils associated with the communistic way of living. He was for peace and opposed war and armaments. He planned a society based on liberty and love, brotherhood of mankind, and the victory of good over evil. In short, Shelley's reformed world was a world of ideal happiness for all human-beings. Shelley was optimistic about the advent of a new millennium in human history and declared :

A brighter morn awaits the human day
When every transfer of earth's natural gifts
Shall be a commence of good words and works ;
When poverty and wealth, the thirst of fame
The fear of infamy, disease and woe
War with its million horrors, and fierce hell
Shall live but in the memory of t.me
Who, like a penitent libertine, shall start,
Look back, and shudder at his younger years.

Failure of Shelley as a reformer

Reforms suggested by Shelley in the social, political and religious life of his times could not be brought about, for the people of his age were conservative in outlook and were hardly prepared to give a trial to the revolutionary ideals of the poet. The reason of Shelley's failure to effect any reform through his

poetry is explained by Baker in his book *Shelley's Major Poetry.* "Shelley's political ineffectiveness with his contemporaries is easily explained. In his Italian exile he was out of touch with the springs of political action, and was therefore denied any means of reaching the popular ear except through the written word. The words he wrote, moreover, were so candid in their criticism of English domestic life, and rulers, that they either went unprinted because of the publisher's understandable fear of prosecution and imprisonment ; or, if printed, were immediately suppressed by the vicious society ; or, if not suppressed, were too little understood to be of any practical political consequences."

Shelley was ahead of his times

Though Shelley could not bring about the reforms that he strove to introduce through his poetry in his life-time, yet during the Victorian age, his unheard voice was sought to be captured in new idealistic fervour for reform that followed in the wake of Reform Bills. What Shelley sounded in *Queen Mab* and *Revolt of Islam* became the guiding principles of reformers during the Victorian age and earned the praise in our times of such Fabian Socialists as George Bernard Shaw. Today Shelley is considered as a prophet and an idealist, a man far in advance of his times in reformative zeal, and if the poet had been alive today he would have been honoured and admired for he had in him the seeds of a true reformer.

Q. 20. Write an essay on Shelley as a rophet pand an idealist.

Or

"Shelley is the supreme poet of the new era which beginning with the French Revolution remains continuous in our own day." Discuss.

Or

Comment on the statement, "Sure and intense aspiration is the first note of Shelley's poetry."

Ans. As a prophet and an idealist

Shelley was not only a reformer and a poet of humanitarianism, but also a prophet and an idealist. He was a visionary dreamer who conjured idealistic pictures of a glorious and glossy future for mankind. He believed in the regeneration and reconstruction of human soceity in lines of equality, justice, peace, and social brotherhood. He hoped that the present state of society governed and dominated by sinister forces of oppression, cruelty, tyranny, exploitation, would soon disappear, and a new world of hopes aspirations, and glorious fulfilment of man's desires would

dawn. There was still a ray of hope for the degenerated world if it paid heed to the counsels of those unacknowledged legislators of the world, the prophetic poets. Poets were given a greater measure of insight and they could peep into the future that awaited mankind provided the course of action on which man moved was chalked out with the opinion of these seers and prophets. Shelley himself confidently believed that the future was bright for man, and the time would come, when "Evil, tyranny, lust and the whole satanic crew will be annihilated ; when love, freedom and beauty alone will survive to reign supreme among men. His poems, whether lyrical, dramatic or political are unified by this ultimate hope in the regeneration of mankind."

"Shelley renounced realism and thought that poetry would be more effective by talking of ideal perfection which can be attained by man in future. It is not wrong to talk of the possibilities open to society for future development and certainly they would be a great spur to further useful activity, but Shelley's possibilities are such as do not interest the people at large ; they cross the border line of all probability and in their non-material character, his perfections are really very imperfect."

Shelley's concept of the ideal world

In his great poems, *Queen Mab*, *Hellas*, *The Revolt of Islam* and *Prometheus Unbound*, and in his shorter lyrics and odes such as *The Cloud*, *To The Skylark*, *Ode to the West Wind* Shelley gave expression to his underlying concept of the ideal world. His confident faith was :

Another Athens shall arise
And to remoter time
Bequeath like sunset to the skies,
The splendour of its prime.

Shelley's prophetic note in his shorter poems

Let us first examine the shorter poems of Shelley if we want to be familiar with his prophetic message and his noble idealism. In the *Ode to the West Wind* the poet strikes the prophetic note in the last stanza of the Ode where he wishes that the fierce wind may spread his prophetic message of regeneration to all mankind. The wind is implored to be a trumpet of the poet's prophecy that the future will be a brighter place and a happier world for mankind to live :

Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth !
And by the incantation of this verse
Scatter, as from an inextinguished hearth !
Ashes and sparks my words among mankind !
Be through my lips to unawakened earth,

The trumpet of a prophecy ! O wind,
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind ?

In *The Cloud* the poet makes references to such prophetic words as 'I change but I can not die', and 'I silently laugh at my own cenotaph'. These words have been interpreted as evidences of Shelley's belief in some kind of immortality as well as his yearning towards a supernal status. "The comparison of the Skylark", says Baker "to a poet hidden in the light of thought whose singing converts the world to sympathy with hopes and fears it formerly heeded not might be construed as evidences of Shelley's continued hopefulness about the possibility of the world's redemption through the power to human thought when it is given memorable expression in poetry."

Shelley's prophetic note in his major poems

The prophetic note based on the dawn of the millennium and the birth of a golden age runs through all the major works of Shelley. In *Queen Mab* the poet hopes that in the new world of brighter hopes and higher aspirations, all the evils of the present day world governed and dominated by kings, tyrants, priests and courtiers will disappear, and there will be a world in which:

The kingly glare
Will lose its power to dazzle its authority
Will silently pass by the gorgeous throne
Shall stand unnoticed in the regal hall
Fast falling to decay, while falsehood' trade
Shall be hateful and unprofitable
As that of truth is now.

The parting advice of *Queen Mab* also exhibits the faith of the poet in a world of a new hopes and aspirations. The words in which *Queen Mab* gives the parting admonition are quoted in full to show how Shelley hoped that in the future there would be "an aspiring change", and everything will tend to perfect happiness and urge the restless wheels on the path of progress:

Yet, human spirit ! bravely hold thy course
Let virtue teach thee firmly te pursue
The gradual path of an aspiring change,
For birth and life and death, and that strange state
Before the naked soul has found the home,
All tend to perfect happiness, and urge
The restless wheels of being on their way.

In *The Revolt of Islam*, Shelley comes out as a prophet giving birth to a new world where in oppressors and tyrants shall have no force. The poem is the triumphant song of victory chanted by the poet for the liberation of mankind from the bondage of power, tyranny and oppression. It is a poem of idealism and is coloured

through and through with that prophetic fervour which marked Shelley's all major works. The hero Laon and the heroine Cythna are idealists having in their soul the prophetic fervour of Shelley himself. They are inspired by higher and nobler ideals. It is the purpose of their life to bring an earthly paradise for human-beings. In seeking that ideal they meet their end, but the hope of the poet in the regeneration of mankind in future does not pass away with the unhappy death of the hero and the heroine. The poet emphasises that mankind shall have to pass through travail and tribulation before the final end and goal is achieved. Though Laon and Cythna do not live to see the consummation of their earthly hopes yet they join the company of immortals who had sacrificed their lives in realizing the glorious dreams of a happy humanity. Though these heroes perish in t e realization of their noble idealism, yet they are like those who live for :

All hope, or love, or truth, or liberty.
Whose forms their mighty spirit could conceive.
To be a rule and law to ages that survive.

In *Prometheus Unbound* we have the prophetic vision of Shelley at its best, Prometheus, the Titan, fights against the tyrannical forces of Jupiter in order that mankind may advance on the path of peace and prosperity. The hero is inspired by the noble ideal of liberating mankind from the bondage of customs,traditions, authority and power typified in Jupiter. In this lyrical drama we hear the clarion call of the poet for a regenerated humanity. The prophetic vision of the poet comes out when the spirit of the Hour appears to report the success of his last Journey and describe finally the state of man under the new dispensation :

The loathsome mask has fallen, the man remains
Sceptreless, free, uncircumscribed, but man
Equal, unclassed, tribeless, and nationless,
Exempt from awe, worship, degree, the king
Over himself; just, gentle, wise, but man.
Passionless—

In *Hellas*, a lyrical drama, we hear the poet heralding the birth of a golden age in the last chorus where he sings—

The world's great age begins anew
The golden years return ;
The earth doth like a snake renew
Her winter weeds outworn;
Heaven smiles. and faith and empires gleam
Like wrecks of dissolving drean.

The poet hopes that humanity will rise from the state of suffering and misery, wading their way through innumerable setbacks and disaster, till a world will be produced in which mankind

will be cheered by a new vision of life. The poet is optimistic about the advent of the new millennium in human history :

> *When every transfer of earth's natural gifts*
> *Shall we commerce a good words and works,*
> *When poverty and wealth, the thirst of fame*
> *The fear of infamy, disease and woe*
> *War with its million horrors and, fierce hell*
> *Shall live but in the memory of Time*
> *Who, like a penitent libertine, shall start*
> *Look back, and shudder at this younger years.*

The vision of the poet that the evils of the past will be undone and a new world of better hopes and aspirations will rise is pathetically, yet hopefully, voiced in following lines :

> *O, cease! must hath and death return !*
> *Cease! must men kill and die ?*
> *Cease! drain not to its dregs the urn*
> *O bitter prophecy.*
> *The world is weary of the past,*
> *Oh ! might it die or rest at last.*

The hope of the poet in the regeneration of mankind has gradually been realized and we who are living in the 20th Century feel some of the prophecies of the poet coming true particularly when we find the forces of socialism based on equality, liberty, fraternity and justice striking boldly at the medley caused by the age old forces of capitalism and exploitation. The ideals cherished by the poet have partly been realized and we hope that the future will witness a complete realization of the dreams of the poet. We bow our head to Shelley the prophet and the idealist, for his intense fervour and reformative zeal and his noble vision of humanity marching ahead on the path of peace and progress.

"Shelley is the patron saint of modern socialism, partly because socialists and communists are often as conservative in their literary tastes as they are revolutionary in their politics. It is common for communists to talk about the heights of Parnassus and Karl Marx's daughter and son-in-law in their lectures on Shelley speak of 'an army of poesy'. Such Victorian academic language, coupled with Marxist technical slang makes a combination as unlike, as possible to the vigour of Shelley's poetry at its best."

Q. 21. How far will you consider Shelley's poetry as the fabric of a vision ?

Or

Examine Matthew Arnold's statement that "Shelley in poetry no less than in life, is a beautiful and ineffectual angel beating in the void his luminous wings in vain."

Ans. As a visionary idealist

Shelley has been considered as a visionary idealist who all his life had been weaving dreams, conjuring visions of a happy world wherein the forces of hatred, jealousy, oppression, exploitation and cruelty would cease to exist. His poetry has been considered as ethereal, visionary and hazy. It is complained that the poet takes flight into such high regions of thought that he loses all contact with the earth and real human life. Shelley himself realised that often he soared higher and left humanity far below on the earthly plain. Realising this fact of empyrean soaring the lyric cry came out of the poet's heart in *Epipsychidion* :

Ah! woe is me!
What have I dared? where am I lifted? how
Shall I descend, and perish not?

....

The winged words on which my sould pierce
Into the height of love's rare universe
Are chains of lead around its flight of fire—
I pant, I sink, I tremble, I expire.

Matthew Arnold's criticism of Shelley

Matthew Arnold was one of those critics who was dazzled by Shelley's glamorous visions but could find no substance in what he said. Matthew Arnold's words against Shelley's visionary idealism have been quoted so many times by almost all writers on Shelley that their repetition will smack of staleness, but all the same they are necessary to show how the Victorian poet and critic was affected by Shelley's visionary powers. Matthew Arnold writes, "The Shelley of actual life is a vision of beauty and radiance, indeed, but awailing nothing, affecting nothing. As in poetry, no less than in life, he is a beautiful and *ineffectual* angel, beating in the void his luminous wings in vain."

Most of Shelley's poems are vague and imaginary

It is a fact that Shelley's poetry dealing with the subject of love, of beauty, nature or human life, is very much near a visionary picture. The poet weaves images of dreams that seem to have no palpable reality behind them. His friend, Hogg, once remarked that Shelley's feet were seldom planted on earth, and that he "flew

aloft to heaven with singing robes around him, with the mantle of the prophet on his shoulders." Shelley knew this very well and his interest in visions and dreams, has been expressed by him quite frankly in the *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty* where he says :

While yet a boy, I sought for ghosts, and sped
Thr' many a listening chambel, cave and ruin,
And starlight wood with fearful steps pursuing ·
Hopes of high talk with the departed dead.

Throughout his life Shelley was in the grip of such visions, and they, in fact, became part and parcel of his life. Symons directs our attention to the visionary life of the poet when he says—

"At no period of his life was he wholly free from visions which had the reality of facts. Sometimes they occurred in sleep and were prolonged with painful vividness into his waking moments Sometimes they seemed to grow out of his intense meditation, or to present themselves before his eyes as the projection of a powerful inner impression. All his sensation were abnormally acute, and his ever-active imagination confused the borderlands of the actual and the visionary."

The fact that Shelley's poetry is substanceless and almost a fabric of a vision is borne out by at least some of his poems. All his imagery is dream imagery. Like his own poet:

He will watch from down to gloom
The lake reflected sun illume
The yellow trees in the ivy-bloom,
Nor heed nor see, what things they be ;
But from these create he can
Forms more real than living man,
Nursing of immortality.

To the poet the world of ghosts and enchanters was more real than the world of men and women. Shelley himself once wrote, "As to flesh and blood, you know that I do not deal in these articles ; you might as well go to a gin-shop for a leg of mutton as expect anything human or earthly from me." True to what he wrote, Shelley wove ghostly and dreamy imagery in his poetry. When we desire to make a thing vivid we compare it with something tangible and real, something familiar and well-known to us. We speak of a thing 'as white as snow' or 'as black as coal' or 'as old as the hills.' But to Shelley this imagery of snow, coal or hills was not pleasing. He showed no familiarity to them. He compared ordinary things with extra-ordinary things. The fallen leaves of autumn in 'Ode to the West Wind' are compared to 'ghosts from enchanters fleeing.' Few poets would have visualised

the leaves in comparison with ghosts, but Shelley does so because to him the ghosts were more familiar than the leaves.

Shelley's women are merely lovely wraiths that greet us to the strains of delicious music. For instance :

See where she stands a moral shape indued
With love and life and deity,
And motion which may change but cannot die.
An image of some bright eternity
A shadow of some golden dream ; a splendour
Leaving the third sphere pilotless ; a tender
Reflection of the eternal Moon of Love
Under whose motions Life's dull billows move,
A metaphor of Spring and Youth and Morning.
A vision like incarnate April, warning
With smiles and tears, Frost the anatomy
Into his summer grave.

This picture that the poet has drawn in the above lines is of a beautiful woman, but the woman is surely not a lady of flesh and blood. The shape is more impersonal than the princess of some old fairy tale. The poet has visualised a thing of beauty, but surely not a woman of human aspirations. She is an exquisite abstraction, and charming metaphor. The only touch of reality in the poem comes with the scenic setting and the rest is all a vision, a fleeting vision that greets us as we read the lines.

In *Alastor* such visions are to be found in profusion. The traveller in search of beauty and liberty moves on with untiring energy guided by some vision which eludes his grasp and recedes farther and farther as he moves onward and onward. In the valley of Kashmir, the traveller sees the beautiful vision of a girl, but soon the vision disappears. The traveller in a state of feverish longing to see the girl of his vision once again goes on his endless march passing through numberless cliffs, plains and rivers. But the vision is not realised. The traveller feels wearied and exhausted and at last his life ends in a tragedy.

Shelley himself felt conscious of this limitation and the feeling came to his mind that he was merely soaring high in a visionary world without keeping touch with the realities of life. In the last stanza of *Prometheus Unbound* he seemed to recognise this, and made an exultant submission to the laws of reality :

To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite ;
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night ;
To defy Power, which seems omnipotent ;
To love and bear ; to hope till Hope creates
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates,
Neither to change, nor falter, nor repent,
This like the glory, Titan is to be

Good, great and joyous, beautiful and free,
This ;s alone Life, Jov, Empire and Victory.

No Vagueness of effect in Shelley's poetry

Yet, for all visionary quality of the verse, for all that strange aloofness, there is no vagueness of effect, or intellectual mistiness. The outlines may be faint, but they are unmistakable, and in such incomparable lyrics as 'The Cloud' and 'The Ode to the West Wind' there is a logical development of idea that blends perfectly with the exquisite music, making it a thing of thought and beauty all compact.

Defence of Shelley

Though in Shelley's poetry, the visionary idealism strikes a reader almost all through *Queen Mab*, *Alaster*, and *Prometheus Unbound*, yet to say that his poetry was without any substance and was divorced from reality and that he was an ineffectual angel will certainly be doing injustice to the genius of the poet. Shelley was a visionary no doubt, but the visions that he wove were not the visions of a mad man, but the visions of a person who devoted all his life for the regeneration of mankind. The visions of Shelley were not the visions of a lunatic, making excursions in a world of wandering imagination, but the visions of a man who had before him all the time the glorification of mankind at his heart. All the visions of Shelley are connected with the regeneration of mankind in a better world to come. To the people at his own times wedded to conservatism and old-fashioned ideologies, the visions of Shelley about liberated humanity might have appeared as dreamy visions or hallucinations ; but to us they do not seem to be visions of a mad man, but the visions of a sane, rightminded person who had the good of mankind at heart and who was all the time inspired by a nobler and better order of human-civilization and human life. Shelley's visions were those of an idealist and a prophet who being dissatisfied with the actual world as he saw it, aspired to change it according to his cherished ideals. His poetry is no doubt a fabric of a vision, but the vision is of a regenerated humanity marching on its onward path of progress and prosperity, free from the sins and blemishes that marred mankind when the forces of tyranny, exploitation, hatred and jealousy were in their ascendancy. Throughout his life Shelley made efforts to give a proper shape to his vision of a regenerated humanity. That he could not realize most of the visions of his life is no fault of the poet, but of the world in which he lived and of the conservative-minded people who were all around him. But to condemn the visions of Shelley as 'ineffectual' would certainly be doing injustice to him.

Arnold's criticism of Shelley is, therefore, unjust. Quiller Couch finds a 'certain amount of positive unfairnness is Arnold's

essay on Shelley. O. Elton is also of the same opinion when he says; "Arnold is wrong about Shelley, wrong beyond recovery and without qualification." Stopford Brooke points out : "How curiously foolish it is to call him a beautiful but ineffectual angel... ..." He maintains that Shelley's poetry 'is not ineffectual,' and the absurdity of Arnold's estimate is pointed out by him at length in his proper appreciation of Shelley's prophetic and visionary genius. Geoffrey H. Crump says, "Beautiful he certainly is, but is he ineffectual ? Because he is vague and impractical, because he regards history as a dirty record of crime and brutality, practicalpolitics as a waste of time, and dogmatic religion as an unnecessary evil and yet provides us with no moral, political, or religious code in their place, is that to say he is ineffectual ?

The fact is that Shelley in his visions treats of human-life as it will be when freed from evils. Shelley was the prophet of a new faith. The gospel of the universal brotherhood of mankind freed from oppression, tyranny and injustice was the vision that inspired him all his life. His poetry could not have much effect on his own times, but certainly it proved to be a powerful instrument of inspiration and regeneration during the Victorian Age when radical reformers were guided by what Shelley had put in the form of a vision in *Queen Mab* and *Alastor*. The vision of *Queen Mab* and *Alastor* might have been rejected during his time, but certainly in the Victorian period the visions served as an instrument of inspiration to the radical reformers. His poetry did much to bring about healthy social changes in the Victorian world. In fact, few English poets have done more to shake the foundation of injustice, of cruel superstitions; of tyranny, of caste, of slavery, than the poetry of Shelley howsoever visionary it might have looked to critics wedded to the actual realities of life. It was Shelley's vision that :

The kingly glare
Will lose its power to dazzle, its authority,
Will silently pass by the gorgeous throne.

This was merely a vision when Shelley wrote these lines in *Queen Mab* but now actually the vision has been realized and in the present day world marching confidently towards socialism and democracy we no more feel the power of kings to dazzale and tyrannise over human beings. We hope that Shelley's vision of a brighter morning awaiting manking :

When every transfer or earth's natural gifts
Shall be commerce of good words and works;
When poverety and wealth, the thirst of fame
The fear of infamy, disease and woe
War with the million horrors, and fierce hell
Shall live but in the memory of Time

Who like a penitent libertine, shall start,
Look back, and shudder at his younger years.

will soon be realized. When the good time downs, as it is bound to come in a century or two, our happy children shall then hold Shelley as a glorious prophet and inspired seer rather than a mere vistonary idealist and an ineffectual angel beating in the void his luminous wings in vain.

Modern Criticism of Shelley

We must also have a look at the modern state of Shalleyan criticism. T. S. Eliot has levelled the charge of adolescence on the poetry of Shelley. F. R. Leavis and Allen Tate have found shelley's workmanship defective. These are extreme views. The balanced modern opinion is expressed by David Daiches. He says, "The charge of adolescence cannot be completely dismissed in assessing Shelley's poetry. There is sometimes hysteria, self-pity, and emotional naivet. But there is a power and conviction in his best work, a visinoary integrity and a rhetorical force, that have their own high splendour. In the twentieth century revolt against romanticism, or what was conceived to be romanticism, Shelley has suffered most, as was perhaps inevitable, as his kind of romantic poetry, with the suffering poet always the hero of his own poem was the most vulnerable to the attack from the ironist and the champion of the metaphysical style. But it has been the shorter and more popular of Shelley's lyrics that have borne the brunt of this attack, and more elaborate works such as 'Prometheus Unbound' which reflect Shelley's genius, including his metrical brilliance have generally been ignored Shelley can be strong and sweeping resonant, he can also be languid nd overtremulous. His intellectual powers were considerable and his human interests large. He grew upto a greater degree than many modern critics will admit. Yet it remains true that he is not a poet who can live with for any great length of time. One surfeits fairly soon. The lack of concrete realization in too many of his poems probably accounts for this."

Q. 22. Comment on the Melancholy Note in Shelley's poetry.

Ans. Melancholy note in Shelley's personal lyrics

Shelley's lyrics concerning his own life are marked with a note of melancholy and despair. When the poet writes about the regeneration, of mankind, he is highly optimistic and hopeful of regeneration, but curiously enough, when he writes about his own personal life, he produces extremely melancholy strains. He always represents himself as a victim of social conventions and

circumstances. The picture that the poet presents of his own life is of a man fallen upon evil days and subject to the worst suffering to which man can be subjected in his life.

Two portraits of Shelley in his poetry

We have two portraits of Shelley in his poetry. The first cames in 'Alastor, and the se ond in 'Adonais'. Describing himself in 'Alastor', he presents an extremely pessimistic picture. Here is Shelley presenting himself in 'Alastor' :

There was poet whose untimely tomb
No human hands with pious reverence reared,
But the charm eddies of autumnal winds
Built o'er his mouldering bones a pyramid
Off mouldering leaves in the waste wilderness
A lovely youth,—no mourning maiden decked
With weeping flowers, or votive cypress wreath,
The loan couch of his everlasting sleep;
Gentle, and brave, and generous,—no lorn bard
Breathed o'er his dark fate one melodious sigh;
He lived, he died, he sung, in solitúde.

In *Adonais*, describing the mourners, Shelley presents himself as a gloomy and sad figure :

Midst others of less note came one frail form
A phantom among men, companionless
As the last could of an expiring storm
Whose thunder is its knell;

He goes on to describe himself further :

A pardlike spirit beautiful ánd swift—
A love in desotation masked, a Power
Girt round with weakness.........
... ...
.........a daying lamp, a falling shower,
A breaking billow.

Further more :

His head was bound with pansies over blown,
And faded violets.

In his lyrics Shelley expresses the mood of melancholy and despair over-powering his life. The feelings of disappointment and sorrow emerge his heart, as in the *Stanzas Written in Dejection near Napels* :

Alas ; I have nor hope nor health,
Nor peace within nor calm around
Nor that content, surpassing wealth

The sage in meditation found,
And walked with inward glory crowned—
Nor fame, nor power, nor love, nor leisure ;
Others I see whom these surround—
Smiling they live and call life pleasure;
To me that cup has been dealt in another measure.

In 'Remembrance' too Shelley says :

Lilies for a bridal bed—
Roses for a matron's head—
Violets for a moiden dead—
Pansies let my flowers be :

Another short lyric *O World ! O Life ! O Time !* is filled with a sense of emptiness which the poet feels in his life :

O World! O life ! O time!
On whose last steps I climb,
Trembling at that where I had stood before
When will return the glory of your prime ?
No more—Oh never more!
Out of the day and night
A joy has taken flight :
Fresh spring, and summer and winter hoar
Move my faint heart with grief, but with delight,
No more—Oh, never more !

On the other hand :

Misery ! we have known each other,
Like a sister and brother
Living in the same lone home
Many years—we must live some
Hours or ages yet to come.

The note of despondency is present in the unfinished *Triumph of Life.* It even makes its appearance towards the end of the chorus in *Hellas* about the return of the golden age :

The world is weary of ted past
Oh ! might it die or rest at last !

In the *Ode to the West Wind* where the poet strikes a note of hope about the regeneration of mankind, he refers of his own personal life as one of sorrow and despair :

Oh, lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud,
I fall upon the thorns of life I bleed
A heavy weight of hours has chained and bowed
One too like thee, tameless, and swift, and proud.

Desire for death is frequently expressed by Shelley perhaps in a more poignant way than Keats could express. In *Stanzas Written*

in Dejection near Naples the strong feeling of the poet for his death is touchingly expressed :

> *I could lie down like a tried child,*
> *And weep away this life of care*
> *Which I have born and yet must bear*
> *Till death like sleep might steel on me.*

Towards the close of *Adonais* the picture of the poet's bark passing through tempest and storm is marked with a note of pathos and despair :

> *My spirit's bark is driven,*
> *Far from the shore, far from the trembling throng*
> *Whose sails were never to the tempest given;*
> *The massy earth and sphered skies are riven!.*
> *I am borne darkly fearfuly, afar.*

Melancholy inherent in his temperament

Shelley's despair does not proceed from any personal disappointment but was something inherent in his temperament. As Quiller-Couch says, 'The true miseries of Shelley's life as of Byron were not of external contrivances ....' "Ce.tainly from one angle, Shelley had little to complain of except his own extra-sensitive nature. The grandson of a rich country squire who was prepared to provide for as many illegitimate children as Shelley chose to have, never really tasting extreme poverty as Chatterton and Keats did ever loving some woman or other, Shelley had no very external reasons, certainly not as strong as other poets before and after him had, to be so pessimistic in outlook. Such cries as his desire to lie down like a tired child and weep away this life of care were more probably the ebb of his high idealism, a reaction from the intensity, the feverishness, the rush and speed of his thoughtful-life."

Shelley's idealism

It would be easier to understand this aspect of Shelley's poetry if we bear in mind the nature of his idealism. His was an abstract idealism. Sadness and despair over-whelmed him whenever actual and the real forced itself upon his consiousness and he realised the contrast between his visions and the reality. A feeling of the "inadequacy of the existing world to meet and satisfy the inner needs of his spirit overcome him often."

No pessimism in Shelley's earlier work

In his earlier poems Shelley was inspired by idealism and a vision of perfection. Naturally his early work does not suffer from pessimism or melancholy. But with the passege of time Shelley came to grip with life, and realised the hopolessness of quest for

the ideal. In the Loan and Cythna way, he could not achieve perfect union of two ideal beings. To his bitter despair he found that woman's heart was less sensitive to his love. He suffered at the hands of women and instead of singing songs in the triumph of love, he sang melancholic songs and sad dirges of faithless and unrequitted love. His love poetry, though inspired by Platonism, became melancholy and sad and the later poems of Shelley genera-lly leave the impression of melancholy on the reader's mind.

Q. 23. Write a note on Shelley's Platonism.

Ans. Shelley's interest in Plato

Shelley was an ardent lover of the Greeks. From his Oxford days onward Greek was his favourite reading. He had a warm corner for Plato in his heart, and he spent considera ble time in the study of Plato's philosophy. Shelley incorporated many ideas of Plato in his poetry. Professor L. Winstanley in his admirable essay 'Platonism in Shelley' has given at length the influence of Plato on Shelley. The ideas which Shelley borrows from Plato can broadly be divided in fourt parts: (1) General religious and philosophic ideas; (2) Cosmic speculations; (3) Social and political ideas; (4) The theory of Love.

We shall deal with each one of them separately.

(1) General religious and philosophic ideas

Shelley's religious ideas were more in conformity with the Greeks, rather than with the Christians. Shelley was not influenced by the Hebraic ideal which Milton had held aloft during his time. He was opposed to the narrow-mindedness and exclusiveness which Hebraism was producing in the minds of its followers. Shelley was all for the Greek attitude towards priests and their orthodoxy. He had the Greek detestation of priestcraft.

Like Plato, Shelley conceived of a supreme power, which is at once immanent and transcendent, and which moves through all objects of Nature and human life. This spirit according to Plato is the governing spirit of the universe. Like Plato, Shelley was vividly conscious of the universe of the world and of all life. He like Plato believed that the one spirit moves through the universe giving them form and shape according to its power. In 'Adonais' Shelley repre-sents this Power :

The One remains, the many change and pass,
Heaven's light for ever shines earth's shadows fly,
Life like a dome of many coloured glass,
Stains the white radiance of eternity,
Until Death tramples it to fragments.

Shelley, like Plato, celebrates this spirit in many different ways. Sometimes this spirit takes the form of love and sometimes that of supreme beauty. In some poems this spirit assumes the form of supreme wisdom and supreme liberty. On the whole, like Plato, Shelley describes it as the informing and formative spirit which compels matter to its will. Shelley takes this spirit as the spirit of love in some poems. For example in the following lines Shelley considers this spirit as the spirit of love !

... . that sustaining love
Which through the web of being blindly move
By man and best and earth and air and sea,
Burns bright or dim, as each are mirrors of
The force for which all thirst.

In 'The Revolt of Islam' Shelley celebrates it as the supreme wisdom :

Wisdom ! thy irresistible children rise
To hail thee, and the elements they chain
And their own will to swell the glory of the train,
O Spirit, vast and deep as Night and Heaven
Mother and soul of all to which is given
The light of life, the loveliness of being.

In 'Epipsychidion' he speaks of the spirit as the spirit of beauty :

......in that Beauty furled
Which penetrates and clasps and fills the world.

In 'Adonias' it is :

That beauty in which all things work and move.

In some poems this spirit take the form of goodness. The spirit represents the force of goodness in human life. In 'Prometheus Unbound' this spirit is represented as the spirit of goodness as in the speech of Asia :

How glorious art thou, Earth ! And if thou be
The shadow of some spirit lovelier still,
Though evil stain its work and it should be
Like its creation, weak yet beautiful.

We have seen that Shelley was Platonic in his view of the Supreme in its wide and varied manifestations as the spirit of love, goodness, beauty and wisdom. His conception of the soul and the importality of the soul was also Platonic in conception. Like Plato, Shelley believed that the soul was immortal and had its pre-existence and re-incarnation. Plato believed in the doctrine of pre-existence. Shelley also believed in the same doctrine and he states his belief in the pre-existence of the soul in the following lines in 'Epipsychidion' :

O too late
Beloved ! too soon adored by me,
For in the fields of immortality
My spirit should at first have worshipped thine.

Plato believed that in the world of heaven, souls of the dead had chance of free intercourse with each other. When one soul reached heaven after shuffling off its moral coils, it had the chance of communion with other souls in the kingdom of God. In 'Adonais' Shelley represents this view. When Adonais reaches the kingdom of God, he is being greeted by other souls who had reached earlier to the kingdom of heaven. In stanza 45 of 'Adonais' the Platonic faith of the poet is very well represented :

The inheritors of unfulfilled renown
Rose from their thrones, built beyond mortal thought
Far In the unapparent, Chatterton
Rose pale, his solemn agony had not
Yet faded from him : Sidney, as he fought,
And as he fell, and as he lived and loved,
Sublimely mild, a spirit without spot.
Arose ; and Lucan, by his death approved ;
Oblivion as they rose shrank like a thing reproved.

In 'The Revolt of Islam' the hero and the heroine are welcomed by the noble deed :

Beneath, there sate on many a sapphire throne,
The Great, who had departed from mankind.

Plato believed that the visible world is nothing but a dull copy of certain divine ideas. Shelley, like Plato, believed that the reality was hidden behind the facade of external things. The super sensuous world was more real to Shelley than the world which he could touch and see. In 'Hellas' and in 'Adonais' he expressed this view at length. In 'Hellas' the poet says :

Earth and ocean,
Space, and the isle of life or light that gem
The sapphire flood of interstellar air
......this Whole
Of sums and worlds and men and beasts and flowers,
......is but a vision......
Thought is its cradle and its grave.

Plato believed that after death the spirit of man is ultimately fused with the spirit of Nature. The soul is immortal and it never meets its end. This view is expressed by Shelley in 'Adonais,' where he represents the spirit of Keats after death mingling with the spirit that permeates the universe. In stanzas 42 and 43 of 'Adonais' this view of the mingling of the human soul with the soul of the universe is very well expressed. Shelley says about Keats' spirit :

He is made one with Nature, There is heard
His voice in all her music, from the moan
Of thunder to the song of night's sweet bird.
He is a presence to be felt and known
In darkness and in light, from herb and stone—
He is a portion of loveliness
Which once he made more lovely. He doth bear
His part, While the One Spirit's plastic stress
Sweeps through :he dull dense world.

(2) Cosmic speculations

Regarding Shelley's cosmic speculations, we notice a considerable resemblance between him and Plato. Plato had taught that the entire universe is the evolution of an absolute intelligence. All parts of this universe are inspired by their own intelligence. The Sun is the visible embodiment of the supreme spirit. The planets are all divine or work under the guidance of divine spirits. Thus according to Plato each object of Nature had a separate intelligence of its own which it receives from the supreme spirit that moves through the Universe. All these cosmic speculations of Plato are embodied in Shelley's poetry. In the 'Hymn to Apollo,' Shelley represents the Platonic view of the Sun, as not merely a source of light, but also of intelligence :

......The Moon's globe
And the pure stars in their eternal bowers
Are cinctured with my power as with a robe,
I am the eye with which the universe
Behold itself.

In 'Prometheus Unbound' Shelley represents the moon and the earth as living spirits endowed with intelligence of their own. They are bound together by the force of Love. The moon circles round the earth :

Gazing, an insatiate bride,
On thy from every side.

(3) Social and political ideas

With regard to man's nature and general position in society we find Shelley following the track of Plato. According to Plato, there is a continuous struggle between the forces of Evil and Good in the world. This spirit of struggle and conflict goes on both in nature and human life. Shelley's entire philosophy of Evil and Good is based upon this Platonic conception. Shelley represented a constant conflict between evil and good in human life as well as the life of nature. He recognized evil as a force in the world which sometimes trampled goodness under its iron heel, but the ultimate success was of the spirit of goodness. This platonic attitude from the corner of Shelley's philosophy of good and evil.

In 'Prometheus Unbound' this dualism is well represented. Prometheus is the soul of man and is the embodiment of everything that is noble and good. Jupiter stands for the baser side of man and is the forces of evil. A conflict goes on between the two forces and ultimately the triumph is on the side of Prometheus, which means the success of good over evil. This attitude of Shelley presented in 'Prometheus Unbound' is essentially Platonic in conception. Like Plato, Shelley believe that the arbitrary will represented by Jupiter was the worst power that could ever be wielded in human life. Plato hated tyranny and so did Shelley. In 'Prometheus Unbound' Jupiter is represented as a. tyrant inflicting tortures upon human beings. Shelley's representation of Jupiter as a tyrant is in conformity with Plato's conception of tyranny. The following lines quoted from 'Prometheus Unbound' concerning Jupiter as a tyrant could well have been written by Plato if he had chosen to write a drama concerning Prometheus Unbound n his life :

Such is the tyrant's recompense; its Just;
He who is evil can receive no good,
And for a world bestowed, or a friend lost ,
He can feel hate, feav,shame; not gratitude.

(4) The Theory of Love

Plato's conception of love coloured Shelley's view of love. Plato believed love as a principle governing all things, divine as well as human. Plato brought-forth the idea of cosmic love governing the universe. In 'Epipsychidion' we have Shelley's fullest expression of the Platonic theory of love. Large portions of the poem are almost a paraphrase of the 'Phaedrus'. "Emilia is a winged soul soaring over the darkness of earth; she is an incarnation of a brighter beauty descending from a lovelier and more wonderful world. She is the mirror which reflects most brightly the glory of the unseen world. The beauty of her mind is far greater then the beauty of her body which is only a dim reflection She is an image of the eternal beauty."

Shelley's philosophy of love was governed by the Platonic ideal that all objects of Nature, animate, or in animate are linked together with a common bond of love. They all strike for a permanent union with a divine spirit. Shelley's poem 'Love's Philosophy' from which the following lines are quoted represents the Platonic view of love in which the philosophy of union, as propounded by Plato, is well represented :

The fountains mingle with the river
And the river with the ocean
The winds of Heaven mix for ever
With a sweet emotion;
Nothing in the world is single;

All things by a law divine
In one spirit meet and mingle
Why not I With thine.

But there are certain points on which he disagrees manifestly with the Greek thinker Plato supported slavery since he was against the mob, that had taken the life of his beloved master. Socrates Shelley. on the other hand, was all out for the equality of man. Further, Plato had no very great sympathies with the creatures called poets. Shelley would have been the last man to accept a republic without poets, "the unacknowledged legislators of mankind."

Q. 24. Write a note on the Nature poetry of Shelley.

Ans. Romantic poets were fascinated by Nature

Nature has been a perennial source of inspiration to poets. Romantic poets were particularly interested in nature and to them the beauties and charms of nature were an unending fountain of joy from which they drank to their heart's content. Like all Romantic poets, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, Byron, Shelley loved nature and established a deep kinship with her. In the essay *On Love* Shelley expresses his love and admiration for nature and writes feelingly about the objects of nature in the following words :

"There is eloquence in the tongueless wind, and a melody in the flowing brooks and the rustling of the reeds beside them, which by their inconceivable relation to something within the soul, awakens the spirit to a dance of breathless rapture, and brings tears of mysterious tenderness to the eyes, like the enthusiasm of patriotic success, or the voice of one beloved singing to you alone."

Shelley as a Wordsworthian in his early poems :

In the early poems. Shelley exhibits the influence of Wordsworth, and his attitude towards nature is that of a lover loving the physical aspects of nature, its rivers, flowers, clouds, stars for their own sake. In these early poems the poet finds neither any message from nature nor does he seek to penetrate behind the curtain of nature to find the spirit of love in the life of nature. This love of the poet for nature advances as he grows in his poetic stature, and instead of dealing with nature in its simpler and homely aspects, he now concentrates on majestic and splendid objects of nature. He no more remains an adorer of Nature in its simpler forms, but turns to its majestic, splendid and gorgeous aspects. He becomes interested in rocks, caves, cliffs, starry sky, and such other

magnificent sights of Nature. "He is the poet of mountains and rivers but unlike Wordsworth he is not rooted to any particular spot like a statue. His place of observation is constantly changing with the movement even of the things observed and always impatient of this movement as too slow, he has recourse to his imagination to carry him to the Atlantic's level powers from the banks of the Arno." He presents like Turner "the pomp and splendour of the evening skies, the wind and the changeful glory of atmospheric effects, the terror of tempest those rare and more awe-ful manifestations of Nature, when she puts on a supernatural grandeur and seems indeed to be alive, a spirit, of strength and beauty, whose rainbow blinds us, whose ethereal loveliness awes and masters us, whose half dreadful charms at once inspire and subdue us."

Lack of pictorial definiteness in his pictures

While depicting these grand and majestic sights and scenes of nature, Shelley does not verry much care for clarity of vision and picturesqueness. He often ethereälizes nature and makes her vague, hazy and indefinite. His landscapes lack that pictorial definiteness which we find in Tennyson. Shelley is the least pictorial of nature poets and his descriptions are often clothed in mist. The desCriptions of underwater scenery in the 'Ode to the West Wind' of boat journies in several poems, of the flow of the stream in Arethusa are hazy and misty. The outline of the objects of Nature is blurred. Vagueness naturally results, and his landscape descriptions appear to be :

Like pageantry of mist on an unnatural stream,

Use of abstract imagery

This vagueness and mistiness in Shelley's nature poetry is partly due to the abstract imagery that the poet employs in presenting concrete objects of nature. The cloud Is represented as "the nursling of immortality" and the skylark is "like a poet hidden in the light of thought." Partly it is due to a swift succession of similies which blurs the pictures of nature instead of giving them a palpable and tangible shape. "He peoples his mountains and caverns with spirits but not content with these essences of natural forms he gives an impalpable shape of Hours and Years and they hover in the great depths of the universe like notes of music on their fiery chariots."

Shelley's moods governed his attitude to Nature

Shelley's attitude towards Nature was governed by different moods. Sometime he pictured Nature in close association with human affections, and sometimes he represented her in an absolutely detached and unconcerned way, as if, he were a scientist interested in the objective analysis of the beauties of

Nature. For example in 'Stanzas Written in Dejection near Naples,' Nature is presented in the background of the poet's own emotional feelings. The landscape of this poem is coloured by the poet's personal feelings, but in 'The Cloud' there is absolutely nothing of that human-association which we find in 'Stanzas Written in Dejection near Naples.' 'The Cloud' is independent of human contacts. There is not a word of human interest, and the entire poem appears to be the product of a scientist closely watching and observing the phenomenon of 'The Cloud' The accuracy of the poet in the presentation of 'The Cloud' has been considered the accuracy of a scientist which would satisfy even a meterologist. It has its transcendent serenities, and it holds some secret of ever-lasting life. Similarly 'The Skylark' seems to possess an insight and rapture denied to man.

Immortality of Nature

Shelley presents Nature as a continuous stream that goes on endlessly untouched by human calamities. Nature suggests to Shelley a relative immortality and as such Nature in his view is greater than man subjected to the loss of decay and death. Nature's immortality is suggested by the poet in several of his poems. Radiant herself, she throws a glimmering light beyond the horizon of Time.

Shelley's pantheism

Like Wordsworth, Shelley observes a spirit permeating the objects of Nature. This spirit in Shelley's views is the spirit of Love and the poet identifies the spirit of Nature with the spirit o Love. He thus brings about a fusion of Platonic philosophy of love with the age old doctrine of pantheism. Under the influence of this spirit of love Shelley sees in every object of Nature a subtle beauty of the spirit, capable of thinking, feeling and expressing in quite the same way as man. Since the poet sees the spirit of love running through the objects of Nature, he finds Nature's heart full of love and sympathy for all those who approach her with love. Thus in Shelley's attitude towards Nature, there is an underlying feeling of love, and the poet, like Wordsworth, believes that if Nature is approached with love, it can make one's life really lovely.

Shelley's Nature-myths

It is the power of love that Shelley sees in Nature which enables him to face the battle of life. Shelley becomes a myth-maker and makes free and lavish use of myths in his lyrics. Shelley; the myth-maker, finds extreme delight in picturing Nature through myths. One example of Shelley's myth-making ability occurs in 'The Sensitive Plant.' In 'The Sensitive Plant' he creates the myth of winter who like a giant tears the cataracts from the hill and hangs them to his girdle. The lines are as follows :

For winter come : the wind was his whip :
One choppy finger was on his lip
He had torn the cataracts from the hills
And they clanked at his girdle like manacles.

In *Prometheus Unbound* there is the impersonation of the earth and the moon. The image of the moon is nature-myth and every touch of the moon is mythical. Within the chariot, the moon like a lady :

sits winged infant; white
Its countenance like the whiteness of bright snow,
Its plumes are as feathers of sunny frost,
Its limbs gleam white; through the wind-flowing folds
Of its white robe, woof of ethereal pearl

The Cloud also abounds in myths. The entire poem is a myth of the Cloud. "The cloud is accompanied by a host of other impersonations of nature—the sanguine sunrise with his meteor eyes, the orbed maiden of the moon, the imprisoned giant of the thunder, the lightning which runs through the sky to find his love—all are touched into life, and there is not one phrase, not one adjective which is contradictory of, or which does not illuminate natural fact."

Intelligence in Nature

Another significant factor in Shelley's delineation of Nature lies in his insistence that nature has an intelligence of her own. In this respect Shelley stands contrasted with Wordsworth. Wordsworth 'spiritualizes' Nature, whereas Shelley 'intellectualizes' her. Shelley regards that Nature can feel, act and think like a living thing. His 'Cloud' and 'West Wind' are living things.

Relation of Man and Nature in Shelley's poetry

Shelley sometimes uses natural phenomena as emblematic of mental states. In *The West Wind*, *The Cloud* and *The Skylark*, one finds him seeking in the natural world for analogies by which to reassure himself that regeneration follows destruction, that change does not mean extinction, and that there is yet hope for the world, if it will pay heed to those unacknowledged legislators, the prophetic poets. The west wind becomes for him the trumpet of a prophecy and an instrument by which his inseminating principles can be spread. Such statements about the cloud as 'I change but I cannot die' and 'I silently laugh at my own cenotaph' could be accepted as Shelley's belief in some kind of immortality, as well as his yearning towards a superna! status. The comparison of the Skylark to a poet hidden "in the light of thought" whose singing converts the world to "sympathy with hopes and fears it headed not" might be construed as evidence of Shelley's continued hope-

fulness about the possibility of redemption through the power of human thought when it is given memorable expression in poetry.

Use of Nature Symbols

A significant trait of Shelley's poetry of nature is his use of natural objects of forces of nature as symbols. "In *Adonais* the poet employs 'pansies and violet' as the symbols of the fate of his poetry and innocence of his life. Objects of Nature like sky, stars, moon, sun, wind and water are represented by the poet as symbols of eternity. The cloud is a symbol of the poet's own subjective consciousness. In *The West Wind* he finds the symbol of the destroyer and the creator. "He interprets not only the moods of nature but describes those impressions of nature also which are felt by the swiftly changing phenomena of his plastic imagination. He is the great impressionist who catches all those subtle effects of light and shade and the fleeting combinations of objects always in movement which would escape the attention of a formalist like Keats whose sensibility is more of a sculptor than of a musician."

Note of optimism in Shelley's Nature Poetry

Shelley's Nature poetry is marked with a note of optimism, though his personal life had been one of sadness and despair. The last lines of the *Ode to the West Wind* are an assertion of the poet's optimism :

O Wind,
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind ?

Shelley's treatment of Nature is thus scientific as well as philosophical, mythical as well as human. He stands on a higher plain as a poet of Nature than Keats, and in certain respects he goes beyond Wordsworth, the high priest of Nature, in the nineteenth century.

5

Byron

Q. 25. Was Byron a Romantic Poet ? In what way did Byron differ from the Romantic poets of his age ?

Or

Examine Byron as the Romantic Puzzle or the Romantic Paradox.

Ans. 'Byron—the Romantic Paradox

In the history of English Romanticism, Byron occupies a peculiar position. As pointed out by C. M. Bowra, 'From a European point of view, he is the chief exponent and most renowned figure of the whole movement, the man who summed up in himself its essential qualities and by his inspiring example imposed them on the civilized world. From the usual English point of view, he is hardly a Romantic at all, but survival from the eighteenth century and an enemy of much that the true romantics thought most holy." It is a fact that Byron differed from other accredited Romantic poets, Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, Scott and Southey, in his method and practice as a poet. Profoundly touched at certain points by romanticism Byron was never a poet of romanticism in the sense that Shelley, Scott and Coleridge were. Like Wordsworth and Southey, Byron was deeply touched by its influences at one moment, but was far away at the next.

Lack of reflectiveness in Byron's poetry

What fascinated the Romantic poets was imagination and a love for fairy romance and dreamy lands of medievalism. Either the romantic poets dwelt in the world of the past through their power of imagination as did Keats, or they were visionary idealists like Shelley conjuring up pictures of the future. In any case in the works of the Romantics, we come across a free play of the imaginative power. But in Byron's poetry there is little of that imaginativeness and reflectiveness which we find in Shelley or Keats. Byron is essentially the poet of instinct rather than of imagination. To quote Quennel, "In his work, as in his life, he was a creature of instinct. Few men have gone through existence with less faith in the validity of the human will." Goethe says, "Byron possessed a high degree of that demonic instinct and attraction which influences others independently of reason, effect or affection, which sometimes succeeds where the understanding fails." With his adoration of instinct rather than of imagination, Byron could not be a romantic poet like the imaginative Shelley or

Keats. Byron gave up the romantic view of imagination and adopted a new. realistic art and that is why, "On the central article of the Romantic Creed, the importance of the imagination, Byron is regarded as a heretic by such good judges as Keats and Burke and he would not have denied the accusation."

Unlike the Romantics Byron was of the earth

The Romantic poets, except perhaps the idealistic Shelley, were not interested in realism and the description of the actual as it was. Wordsworth wandered like a could over hills and dales to know the mysteries of Nature; Coleridge wrought his weird dreams and was wrecked in a mist of opium; Scott with his pen lifted the veil that kept shrouded the enchanting past of the century; Shelley wove out his myths and remained wrapped up in his visions and wished to be the 'trumpet of prophecy' and even Keats sought his beauty in Gothic arches and Grecian urns and inns. It was Byron who was of the earth and wedded to the actual realities of the mundane world. Byron scorned to leave his times, as Symon affirms, "He loved the world for its own sake and for good and evil." "Shelley moves among the clouds", says Prof. Grierson, "Byron never quits the earth. From first to last he is concerned with realities and nothing but realities, mundane realities real persons and scenes and happenings." His realism sometimes becomes too gross, and nauseating and then we are tempted to adopt Pope's line on Defoe for Byron, 'Earless on high stands unabashed Byron." It is this realism of Byron so passionately touched and expressed in 'Don Juan' that separates and distinguishes him from other romantic poets. "Of all the great poets of the time Byron presents the peculiar aad piquant combination of an ardent romantic imagination and an intellect and outlook essentially wordly and matter-of-fact. With Keats it was the past, with Shelley the future, with Byron it is the present that really interests and grips him. His ardent fancy dallied with the past on occasion ; but he is most at home with the England of his day, the Europe of his day, its social hypocrisies, its literary conventions and affectations. He is always at heart society gentleman, and both in its good and bad sense, a man of the world." His 'Don Juan' is an epic of the age as it gives a panoramic view of contemporary life, and in the poetic searchlight turned on several facts of actual life we discover a wide range of the poet's tastes and the wonderful varieties of his response to experience.

Byron—a Realist

It was Byron's object in poetry to be a realist rather than an imaginative romanticist. In 'Don Juan' XII, he says :

I mean to show things really as they are
Nor as they ought to be, for I avow

That till we see what's what in fact, we're for,
From much improvemeut.

Like Alexander Pope, Byron too believed that by 'stooping' to it he was moralizing his song. "The truth to which Byron stoops is a matter of fidelity to what he believes to be observable facts. Accordingly, he more than once expresses a sceptic's impatience with metaphysical and theological speculation. In all this he aligns himself rather with his Augustan predecessors than with his Romantic contemporaries."

Byron's genius was essentially satirical

Byron's genius was essentially satirical like the classical poets of the XVIII Century, and he found greater delight in following their mode and method than toeing the essential romantic dreaminess and visionary idealism. Pope and Gifford attracted him most and he had great respect for Pope's 'Dunciad' and Gifford's 'Beviad' and 'Meviad.' His main works are satirical in content like the works of the classical poets of the XVIII Century. He is said to have loved and liked his 'English Bards and Scotch Reviewers' much more than his 'Childe Parold' because it is purely eighteenth century in spirit. 'The English Bards and Scotch Reviewers' is a complete triumph of Byronic Classicism, and this high spirited satire is indeed the 'Dunciad' of romanticism, With the satirical affinity with the XVIII Century poets, Byron gets further away from the Romanticism of Wordsworth and Keats. Byron's attachment with classical poets of the XVIII Century was very strong ; and Moorman nicely states how Byron was all for classicism and the eighteenth century. Moorman says, "When the romantic principles of the new school seemed everywhere triumphant, Byron came forward as the dauntless champion of Pope, and when he essayed drama, he turned his back upon Shakespeare and sat at the feet of Alfeei. He never wholly broke away from the Augustan poetic diction."

Wit in Byron's poetry

"Byron differs from the authentic Romantics not merely in his low estimate of the imagination but in the peculiar quality and power of his wit. The world of the Regency pursued its pleasure in an atmosphere of malice and mockery, and Byron had his fair share of both. His emotions and intelligence were at war, and through wit he found some sort of reconciliation between them."

Byron differed from the Romantics in his response to experience

Byron differed from his Romantic contemporaries in the complex charaeter of his response to experience. In his earlier poetry he had tried to look at things from almost a single point of view, but in 'Don Juan' he abandoned this and exploited the

whole range of his feelings. Whereas other Romantics tended to follow a single principle in their approach to life, Byron followed his own wayward changing moods. Like the Romantics his nature could not be confined to one single channel. He had a variety of tastes and responses. He had an omnivorous taste for experience and tried most things that came his way. The result is that his great poem 'Don Juan' provides a vivid and searching commentary on the contemporary rescue.

Byron as a Romantic poet

But in spite of his differences with the Romantic poets, Byron was the child of his age and he did not abandon Romanticism completely. "Though Byron abandoned Romantic view of the imagination and practised a new realistic art," says Bowra; "he did not altogether abandon some themes and ideas which meant most to the Romantics." Like the Romantics, he had a deep and intense love for nature, freedom, passion, melancholy and romance. He felt that matters like nature and love were sufficient in themselves to inspire poetry, and he need not look beyond them for something else. Like the other romantics he was attracted towards Rousseau and Chateaubrand.

He was more revolutionary than Shelley, the most romantic poet among the romantics. He was more typical of his time than either Wordsworth or Shelley, for while their outlooks were limited by their private philosophres, Byron absorbed the life around him and expressed what thousand of his contemporaries felt. That is why Arnold spoke of him as "the greatest elemental power in English literature since Shakespeare." The note of romanticism in pointedly sounded by Byron in such verses as 'I would I were a careless child', 'I roved a young Highlander' and the justly famous 'Lachiny Gair'. The influence of Macpherson's 'Ossian' is very strong in 'The Death of Calmar And Orla', and blends with that of the ballad-poets in 'Oscar of Alva'. The lyrics and the elegiac poems also present Byron's romanticism. The melancholic poems of Byron are saturated in the romantic tradition, and the same strain can be felt in quite a large number of stanzas in 'Childe Harold'. The love for freedom which characterised the romantic poets is equally well present in Byron's poetry, and in certain respects he was more revolutionary than Shelley.

Taking all these factors into account we cannot deny to Byron a place among the Romantics. He had his love and likings for pope and the classical poets of the 18th Century, but none the less he was an elemental force among the romantic poets of the 19th Century. Even if Byron joined hands with the classicists and the Augustans, there was a difference between the classicism of Pope and the classicism of Byron. "The invocation to Pope and Dryden in the last stanza compels us to recall the difference between their Augustanism and Byron's. Pope and Dryden seem

characteristically to write as the spokesmen of a coherent and civilized social group. The members of this may not hold identical religious. social, political and other lebels, but they de share, and their poets share. a deep respect for the fundamental Augustan virtues of good sense, reasonableness and moderation. Byron writes with an equally keen awareness of his publ c, and he writes as an exponent of good sense. 'But. so far from seeming to feel his public sustaining him, he evidently draws very much more exclusively on his own resources. and even at times has to defy what he supposes to be a canting, a moralistic and sensibilitious world."

Q. 26. Write an essay on Byron as a satirist in verse.

Ans. Byron—a great satirist in verse

Byron was one of the most vigorous and powerful satirists of England during the 19th century. His genius was neither inclined towards the lyrical nor towards the dramatic side. In satire Byron found the suitable medium for his rebellious and passionate nature and it is in satire that he turned most joyously from the early years of his life. He had a great liking for Alexander Pope, the prince of satirists in the 18th Century and for Gifford, his worthy suceessor. He closely imitated their form and style in his satires, and almost all the satirical works of Byron were written under the influence of Pope, Gifford and Swift.

Byron's poetic career began as a sstirist and ended as a satirist The major poetic production of his early period was the last Neo-Classic Satire, 'English Bards and Scotch Reviewers', his last and greatest poetic production was his epic satire 'Don Juan' on society. Following the trend of popular taste Byron turned away during the middle period of his poetic career from satire to sentiment and produced 'Childe Harold'. But afterwards he realised that his genius was not well fitted for the role of a sentimentalist and soon he renounced sentiment in favour of satire. His strongly satiric nature came to the fore-front again and permanently gave up the Childe Harold role, He eventually found compression in serio-comic satire.

Byron's first satire—'Hours in Idleness'

Byron began his first satire in 1807 as a school boy. This work is known as 'Hours in Idleness'. It was severely criticised for its immaturity and thoughtlessness in the 'Edinburgh Review'. Byron did not take the offence lying down, but dashed out against his critics with a great vigour in his satirical work 'The English Bards Scotch Reviewers'. Here Byron expressed himself as a strong avenger of his wrongs in the following words:

And though I hope not hence unscathed to go
Who conquer me shall find a stubborn foe.

In this poem Byron's model was Pope, the author of the 'Dunciad'. There is not much to be said in favour of a poem whose inspiration was little more than bad temper, and Byron himself was later ashamed of it. It lashes out indiscriminately at the whole literary world of the time, and has none of the finesse of Popian satire. To the satire couched in the heroic couplet, Byron to quote Hough, "adds nothing to the tradition except the impress of a new personality, a certain heirless arrogance that was to be the note of so much of his best work." In this work Byron satirises the poets of the Lake-School. Southey and Wordsworth are particularly satirised by Byron.

He never tries of ridiculing the Lake Poets. The constant use of 'Pedlars', 'Boats', 'Waggons' in 'Wordsworth's poetry particularly in 'Excursion' irritates Byron and he satirically bemoans the fall of English poetry from the heights of Pope and Dryden to the banality of Wordsworth :

'Pedlars' and 'Boats' and 'Waggons'! Oh Ye shades
Of Pope and Dryden, are we come to this?
That trash of such sort not alone evades
Contempt, but from the bathos' vast abyss
Floats scumlike uppermost and these Jack Cades.
Of sense and song above your grave may hiss
The 'little boatman' and his Peter Bell
Can sneer at him who drew Achitophel.

Byron's other works in Satire

Byron's next works in satire are 'Hints from Horace', and 'Curse of Minerva'. In both these satires Byron, to quote Oliver Elton, "is a young tiger cub lashing out with sharp and clumsy claws." Then came 'Beppo' written not in the heroic couplet but in Ottava Rima. It is a curtain-raiser to his greatest poem 'Don Juan'. It almost foreshadows the spirit of 'Don Juan'.

The Vision of Judgment

In 1822 Byron came out with another vigorous satire, 'The Vision of Judgment'. This satire is directed against George III and is a direct retort to Southey's praise of the king. The misdeeds and misdoings of the king are exposed in this satire. The king is so base and low that he cannot be allowed to enter Heaven. Even Satan refuses to admit him in Hell. Satan says:

Of him I have kings, enough below (earth).

At the end, the king is represented as a thief who quietly slips into Heaven unnoticed by ony one This satire of Byron is the most witty and light-hearted satire. The flippancy of its tone can

be well recognised by us. It is full of ridicule and banter. Byron's s'ap-dash manner and carelessness are clearly perceptible in this satire. The difference between Pope's presentation of personalities fdr ridicule in 'Dunciad' and Byron's presentation of personalities in 'The Vision of Judgment' is well marked out. Where as Pope's portraits are highly finished, because of the labour spent on them, Byron's portraits are clumsily drawn and lack artistic finish. His satire becomes loose and here we realise the truth of Elton's remark about Byron's satire—"His loose tongue is his worst enemy, for like Rousseau he would sacrifice anybody and anything"

Don Juan

Byron's last epic satire is 'Don Juan'. In this work Byron's genius is characteristically revealed. Its panoramic survey of human society in all the lands of Europe, with the foibles and weaknesses of social institutions and political personalities is truly staggering in its satirical wit Commenting on its scope and design, C. M. Bowra writes, "It is the record of a remarkable personality, a poet and a man of action, a dreamer and a wit, a great lover and a great hater, a man with many aims of the 18th Century and yet wholly of the 19th, a Whig noble and a revolutionary democrat." The poet himself speaks of this work as an epic satire:

My poem is epic and is meant to be
Divided in twelve books, each book containing
With love and war, a heavy gale at sea.

The hero of this epic satire is Don Juan, a Spanish adventurer, and his biography is the thread on which Byron hangs description, episodes and satirical digressions. The poem reflects every mood of Byron's complex and contradictory nature. Here Byron comes before us as the great romanticist and the great realist, the voluptuary and the cynic, the impassioned lover of liberty and the implacable foe of hypocrisy. In this epic satire, Byron offers his reflections almost on all aspects of life.

War is satirised by Byron in the following two striking lines:

"Let there be light" said God "There was light"
"Let there be blood" says man, "and there is a sea".

A coquette is exposed and attacked in the following lines :

Such is your cold Coquette, who can't say, 'No'
And won't say 'Yes', and keeps you on and off-ring
On a lee-shore, till it begins to blow
Then sees your heart wreckeed, with an inword scoffing

Love is satirised as :

The very god evil
For after all we cannot call thee devil.

In short, *Don Juan* is an epic satire in which Byron satirises individuals, social institutions and modern society in general.

Charges of cynicism and immorality against Byron's satire

Charges of cynicism and immorality are brought against Byron's satire. These charges have been squarely met by True-blood who maintains that the satires of Byron are remarkable for their sincerity and freedom. They are constructive rather than destructive in their character. Byron cannot be called cynical because he exposes sincerely the weaknesses of many human institutions. Byron attacks not ideals but false idealism, false sentiment, false loyalty, false morality, false patriotism and false freedom. With keen insight and utter fearlessness he analyses, and exposes the contrasts and contradictions in human life and relentlessly tears down insincerity. Similarly the charges of misanthropy cannot stand against Byron. "His sense of 'the nothingness of life', his conviction that 'vanity of vanities, all is vanity', is expressed sardonically, wryly, sometimes theatrically, but it is expressed and with a pity for, rather than a detestation of his fellow men." He attacks not virtue but false virtue. Byron himself defends the charged of degrading moral in the following words :

"I was willing to plead guilty of having sometime represented vice under alluring sins, but it was so generally in the world and therefore it was necessary to paint it so. My moral was unexceptionable."

All these charges of insincerity, hypocrisy, misanthropy, cannot stand against Byron. He is undoubtedly one of the most virile, forceful and out-spoken satirists in the English language.

Q. 27. Write a note on Byron as a Revolutionary Poet and a Poet of Freedom.

Ans. Byron—the great poet of freedom and liberty

Byron was one of the proudest revolutionary poets and the poets of freedom and liberty that England has ever produced. He was a born rebel and the fire of liberty and hatred for tyranny burnt furiously in his veins. "Art for Art's sake", says Courthope, was "abhorrent to his genius. He was the Avtar of the revolutionary movement, where every thought was prompted by revolt against the moral postulates of society."

Byron had been from his childhood days a great fighter and he stood vigorously against all forms of tyrannies and oppressions. "From childhood he had been a fighter" says Lafcadio Hearn, "and he was not in the loast afraid to fight society. He attacked all the conventions, all hypocrisies, all the moral commonplace of

English society in his poetry. He made heroic crime appear more attractive than cowardly virtue, and even boldly ridiculed the religious beliefs that accused or sheltered social falsehood."

Byron—the great champion of the outcast

Byron was the great advocate of the out-cast and down-trodden people, and always stood for the defence of liberty and freedom. In whatever shape and in whatever place he found oppression and tyranny, he considered it his religious duty to strike boldly at them with all the vigour of a grand rebel. This love for freedom was not a theoretical principle with him, but a practical beacon of life. He cried against the powers of tyranny in the following words :

What shall revolting thraldom again be
The patched up idol of enlightened days.

Byron stood for both personal and national liberty

He stood for personal liberty and the liberty of nations. His views were determined by a powerful and positive belief in the work of individual man. He resembled Blake in his condemnation of senseless cruelty and hypocrisy which it breeded for its support. He was the upholder of the natural man and thought that his bodily pleasures were worthy of protection. He fought for the cause of liberty and went to Greece to support the Greeks in their struggle against tyranny. "His conception of liberty", as Bowra observes, "was more instructive than intellectual. If he sometimes followed mere whims and impulses, if some of his ambitions were no more than affectations, he was not without guiding principles, and his death at Missolonghi shows that he was not an actor but soldier, a man of affairs and a master of man." This love of liberty is well-marked in Byron's works. He wrote the 'Prisoner of Chillon' in the defence of liberty, and the hero Bonnivard is a votary of liberty like Byron himself. The whole oppressed Europe looked to him for salvation and he became the trumpet voice of freedom. With Byron, liberty became the ruling passion, and he considered it his birth right to fight against all tyranny :

For I will rack, if possible, the stars,
To rise against earth's tyrants.

Both Byron and Shelley attacked tyrants

This love of liberty is expressed in the denunciation of tyrants such as Napolean and the Duke of Wellington "best of cut-throats", and in denouncing Czar and his evil-agents. In this connection it is better to compare Shelley and Byron. Shelley thought of the future and was inspired by an ideal future. Byron attacked tyrants wherever they existed and pleaded the cause of oppressed humanity. He could not believe that men would for long tolerate the senseless restrictions to which they were subjected.

He wished to stir them to revolt, to make them rid of their monarchs, and made the world free for free persons. Byron accused his own country-men of arraying their strength in the side of tyranny and stated that freedom could be possible when the powerful obstacles, thrones and courts were removed.

Byron—a true follower of the principles of the French Revolution

Byron remained more than other Romantics a true follower of the principles of the Revolution. 'Much more than Wordsworth and Coleridge, who after their first enthusiam for the Revolution surrendered to caution and scepticism, more even than Keats, whose love of liberty was hardly developed to its full range. Byron wished to be free and wished the other men must be free too."

Byron was equally revolutionary in his attitude towards the evils and vices of his age. He was a social revolutionary and ruthlessly exposed and attacked, as in 'Don Juan', the philistinism of the upper English-class, the aristocracy and the monarchy. He exposed the hypocrisy, the senseless cruelty, the snobbery, the fraud, the cant and the indolence of the upper classes in society.

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Q. 28. Write a note on the Byronic Hero.

Ans. Background to the Byronic hero

First of all let us take into consideration the background from which came the Byronic hero. Mr. W. H. Auden has analysed it—"Byron spent his early years in comparative poverty with a mother who alternately hit him and covered him with Kisses, and a Calvinist nurse who spoke to him of Hell-fire and predestined damnation......Unhappiness sharpens a child's wits and he soon realised that his parents were violent and odd people, that his ancestors were violent and odd too, and that his deformity made him different from other children. Further, as usually happens when the parents are separated, he idealized the absent one, the father. Out of this background came the byronic Hero. Father made him passionate, nanny made him doomed, ancestors and the little lame foot made him aristocratic yet the bitter enemy of society."

Main characteristics of Byronic hero

There are certain characteristics which are commonly to be found in all the heroes of Byron—Childe Harold, Lara, Manfred, Bonnivard, Mazeppa. The heroes of Byron share certain common qualities, and out of these has emerged to general Byronic hero, covering the essential traits and qualities of all the heroes of Byron. In the Byronic hero are represented the essential qualities and characteristics that were found in the character of Byron himself.

The Byronic heroes are essentially projections of Byron's own personality, his likings and dislikings, his hatreds and Antipathies. The heroes of Byron share his enthusiasm and hatred, his opposition to tyranny and oppression, his cynicism and melancholy, and his disregard for the values of life. In fact, the Byronic hero is the person of Byron himself. "He was himself the beginning, the middle and the end of all his own Poetry, the hero of every tale, the chief object in every landscape. Harold, Lara, Manfred, and a crowd of other characters, were universally considered merely as loose incognitos of Byron and there is reason to believe that he meant them to be considered so." The wonders of the outer world, the Tagus, with the mighty fleets of England riding on its bosom, the flowers of Cintra over hanging the shaggy forest of Cork trees and willows etc., were all accessories, the background to one dark and melancholy figure, the figure of Byron."

Let us note the common characteristics of the Byronic hero. "All are almost all, his heroes have minds which seem at variance with their fortunes, and exhibit high and poignant feelings of pain and pleasure; a keen sense of what is noble and honourable, and an equally keen susceptibility of injustice or injury, under the garb of stoicism or contempt of mankind. His heroes are men who have arrived by different roads to the same goal of despair, who are sick of life, who are at war with society, who are supported in their anguish only by an unconquerable pride resembling that of Prometheus on the rock or of Satan in the burning marl, who can master their agonies by the force of their will, and who, to the last, defy the whole power of earth and heaven. It appears that the heart of his heroes has withered, and their capacity for happiness had gone to melancholy. They are the authors of scorn, misanthropy and despair." In short we may say that the Byronic hero is the embodiment of pride, bravery, restlessness, wickedness, melancholy, cynicism, freedom, opposition to oppression and restraint. His heroes are sadists to a certain degree—they take pleasure inflicting pain upon others. They are proud, moody, cynical, with defiance on their brows and misery in their hearts. Corsair is proud, capricious, scornful, revengeful to the point of cruelty, prey to remorse and magnanimous enough to submit to the most barbarous tortures rather than kill a sleeping enemy. Cain is a murderer, and Sardanaplaus is proud, brave and voluptuous. Bonnivard and Mazeppa are like Byron, lovers of freedom and critics of oppression. The final estimate of the Byronic hero is that he is the projection of Byron himself. The first appearance of the Byronic hero came in Childe Harold and the last appearance of the same hero is Don Juan.

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Q. 29. Write a note on the autobiographical element in Byron's poetry.

Or

Bring out the confessional elements in Byron's Poetry Can the charge of insincerity and pose be levelled against Byron ?

Ans. Self-revelation in Byron's poety

"Byron concentrates in himself and reflects in all his writings, the disappointed aspirations, the failure, the sorrow of his time. Others had felt it before. Shakespeare knew it and gave it utterance in the soliloquies of Hamlet. Rousseau had expressed it in his *Confessions*, But in Byron it finds its fullest expression. His own time recognised in him its own genius made vocal. This world's weary disillusionment is the motive that runs through that marvellous and varied stream of poetry poured forth by Byron in the year that follows his exile—the later books of *Childe Harold*, *The Prisoner of Chillon*, *The Dream*, *The Prophecy of Dante*, *Manfred*, *Don Juan*."

The autobiographical or the personal expression of life is present in many of the poems of Byron. He gives expression to his likings and dislikings, his hatred of slavery and his opposition to tyranny, his love of women and his love for the beauties of nature in several of his poems. He himself becomes the hero of his poems. In *Childe Harold* it is Byron himself, who is present throughout in the personality of the Childe. Referring to this Hough remarks : "Childe Harold is the first appearance of the Byronic hero. Childe Harold is simply the first of many fancy portraits of himself."

Confessional tone in Byron's poetry

Byron represents himself again and again, and his poetry is confessional in tone. "Scenes and events and persons are all topics in a great declamation," says Prof. Grierson, "the central theme of which is Byron himself, his wrongs, his sorrows, and sombre reflections on life." "He was himself the beginning, the middle and the end, of all his own poetry. the hero of every tale, the chief object in every landscape. Childe Harold, Lara, Manfred and a crowd of other characters, were universally considered mere lose incognitos of Byron ; and there is every reason to believe that he ment them to be so considered." Self-conscious vanity produced in him an anti-social shyness and inclined him to solitary meditation, consciousness of the possession of high powers made him passionately desirous of active fame. This conflict in his mind between these two contrary forces resulted in the forms of morbid self-expression. References to Byron's life, habits, etc , are unmistakably present in his works.

The charge of insincerity and pose against Byron's confessional poetry

The next question that comes before us is whether what Byron expresses of himself is a sincere expression or a mere hypocritical pose. Many critics have condemned his lyrics and personal poems because of their hypocritical tone. The charge of insincerity is brought against Byron. But Cazamian refutes the charge by asserting that it would be incorrect to say that 'Byron's existence was one continual pose.' Swinburne considered Byron sincere. He writes, "We have to recognise Byron's excellence of sincerity and strength. Without these no poet can live ; but few have ever had so much of them as Byron. His sincerity indeed is difficult to discover and define ; but it does in effect lie at the root of all his good works deformed by pretension and defaced by assumption, marked by folly and veiled by affection ; but perceptible after all and priceless." Besides, a man who has put himself so much in his works and is ever ready to discuss his inner feelings before the world can hardly be insincere. It is rather Byron's fundamental sincerity that account for his greatness. In this connection we close with the well judged opinion of Symons who says, "He is fundamentally sincere which is the root of greatness who has a firm hold on himself and on the world ; he speaks to humanity in its own voice, heightened to a pitch which carries across Europe. No poet had ever seemed to speak to men so directly, and it was through this directness on his vision of the world, and of his speech about it that he became a poet, that he made a new thing of poetry."

Q. 30. Write an essay on Byron's attitude towards Nature.

Ans. Byron's love of Nature differs from Wordsworth.

Where rose the mountains, there to him were friends;
Where rolled the ocean, thereon was his home;
Where a blue sky, and glowing clime extends,
He had the passion and the power to roam.

These four lines from Byron's poem represent his great love and liking for nature. In fact, nature came to be adored by the Romantic poets of England, and Byron was no exception. Byron's love of nature was intense and his attitude towards nature was a little different from Wordsworth, Shelley and Keats. Wordsworth and Shelley spiritualised and intellectualised Nature, and in the words of Compton-Rickett, "They are not merely poets of Nature, they are prophets of Nature. They are concerned less to depict than explain, less to marvel at her beauty than to exult at its inner significance." Wordsworth finds the healing power in nature and

evolves a theory to explain the mysteries of nature. With Byron we have nothing of that type. Byron's love of nature is of its own kind and stands apart from other romantic poets.

"Lacking the intensity of Wordsworth, the subtlety of Coleridge, the receptivity of Keats, the aerial fire of Shelley, Byron possessed a breath and vigour of imagination beyond that of any contemporary. No where is this more agreeably illustrated than in his love of nature. In this love he is at one with all his own particular way, There is no meditative musing, little sense of mystery, but a very lively sense of wonder and delight in the energising glories of nature."

Byron's Nature poetry is free from theory

The first point to be noticed in Byron's attitude towards nature is that it is free from theory or ulterior intention. In this connection Bowra points out in his 'Romantic Imagination': "While Wordsworth sought vision or moral interpretation, Byron took nature as he found and it, appreciated much that Wordsworth missed. His poetry of Nature is instructive and immediate, free from theory or ulterior intention."

Byron loved solitude

Byron went to nature to seek refuge from human society. Byron loved solitude and this he could find it only in Nature. Moorman says, "Byron seeks communion with Nature in order to escape from man; high mountains become 'a feeling' to him when the hum of human cities is a torture", Wordsworth hears in Nature the music of sad humanity; Byron hears no music of humanity in Nature. For him Nature is a refuge, a place of shelter, where he can hid himself from the weariness, the fever and fret of the world. This is the reason why Byron writes :

There is a pleasure in the pathless woods,
There is a rapture on the lonely shore ;
There is society where none intrudes,
By the deep sea, and music in its roar.

Byron's attitude towards nature was not of a country man but of a town man. He appreciated the beaut es of nature from the stand point of a man who was disgusted of the humdrum life or critics.

Byron's subjective approach to Nature

"Byron does not look to Nature to find in it some spiritual essence that is actually there" says Graham Hough, "he looks to it to echo and include his own passions." It means that nature is intimately related to Byron's feelings, and he colours nature according to his mental and physical state. There is the subjective approach of the poet to nature. He did not find the 'healing

balm' that Wordsworth found in nature, but still his feelings well formed the basis of communion with the objects of nature.

Fine descriptions of Nature

Byron, being no philosopher and moralist, takes delight in giving fine descriptions of nature. His descriptions are far superior to Wordsworth, though inferior to Tennyson in the point of accuracy and precision. Byron describes Nature in broad outlines and fuses his feelings with the objects of nature. He does not analyse the objects minutely. The fact is that, "the object which he sees and his own feelings are fused together and take shape in imaginative and metaphorical language." (*Tozer*).

Byron presents both calm and stormy aspects of Nature

Byron sees Nature both in its calm and stormy aspects. Wordsworth was drawn only by the silence that is in the starry sky but Byron presented nature both in its tranquil and stormy aspects. Both these aspects can be seen in 'Child Harold'. About the calmness of the scene, notice the following two lines :

It is the hush of night, and all between
The margin and the mountain dusk, it yet clean.

The stormy aspect is presented in such lines as :

The sky is changed ! and such a change Oh Night,
And storm and darkness, Ye are wonderous strong,
From peak, the rattling crags among,
Leaps the live thunder
Every mountain hath, now found a tongue
And this is in the night ! most glorious night
......earthquake birth.

Byron presents the sinister side of Nature

Byron was able to face the cruel and inhuman aspects of Nature as most of the Romantics could not. With Byron there is no shuddering about the presentation of the sinister side of nature. He does so without contempt and without complaint. In 'Ancient Mariner', Coleridge weaves an alluring magic of a wild moon and dancing stars, but Byron dwells on the sullen and brooding atmosphere without covering it with a romantic halo like Coleridge. The helplessness of man before nature was a subject from which the Romantics shrank, but Byron saw it and spoke sincerely about it.

Byron was attracted mostly towards water in Nature like Milton and his descriptions of Rhone, Rhine and the ocean are fine pieces of nature description in Romantic poetry.

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6

Tennyson

Q. 31. "It will be right for the future historians to treat Tennyson as a representative of the Victorian period and to draw inferences from his work as to the general, intellectual and political tendencies of the nineteenth century." (Lyall) —Discuss.

or

"As a poet who expresses not so much a personal as a national spirit, Tennyson is probably the most representative literary man of the Victorian era." (W. J. Long).—Discuss.

Ans. Tennyson stands in the same relation to his times as Chaucer does to the fourteenth century and Alexander Pope to the early eighteenth century. He is truly "the glass of fashion and the mould of form" of the Victorian period as Spenser was of the Elizabethan age. He is the typical Victorian poet voicing in his poetry the hopes and aspirations, the doubts and scepticism, the refined culture and the religious liberalism of the age. Like a detached but intent spectator he closely watched the ebb and flow of events happening in his country. He believed that it was the function of a poet to penetrate and interpret the spirit of his own age for the future generations, and true to his poetic creed, he presented flawlessly the Victorian age in its varied aspects in his poetry. "For nearly half a century" says W. J. Long, "Tennyson was not only a man and a poet, he was a voice, of a whole people, expressing in exquisite melody their doubts and their faith, griefs and their triumphs. As a poet who expresses not so much a personal as a natio nal spirit he is probably the most representative literary man of the Victorian era."

Tennyson faithfully reflected the various aspects of Victorian life in his poetry. "The change which Tennyson's thought underwent a change in regard to social and political questions itself reveals his curious sensitiveness to the tendencies of his time: for the sanguine temper of the early manhood, the doubt, the misgivings, and reactionary utterances of his middle age, and the chastened hopefulness of his lasty ears, are alike reflections of successive moods which were widely characteristic of his generation." It will be our endeavour now to examine how faithfully the poet is the organ-voice of his age.

The victorian era was essentially an age of peace and settled government. The old fire of revolutionary enthusiasm had been

quenched and the people of the age longed for a life of settled order, stability, and peace. They did not want excitement. They wished to be shoothed and assured. They had enough of tremendous thoughts in familiar shape. They now wanted familiar thoughts in tremendous shape. The Victorians had a love for law, order and discipline. Tumult and storm and the revolutionary feelings upsetting established conventions were frowned by the Victorians. Tennyson reflects this craving of the age for the authority of law, and settled order. The dominant element in Tennyson's thought is his sense of law. The thing which most pleases and impresies him is the spectacle of order in the universe. The highest praise showered by Tennyson on his country is that she is "a land of settled government where freedom is ever broadening down from precedent to precedent." The poet finds the working of law even in the sorrows and losses of humanity. 'Nothing is that errs from law'. This insistence on law and order constrains the poet to conform to certain established conventions of society rather than accept individualism and the unbridled freedom to act according to one's whims and fancies. Tennyson believed in slow progress and shunned revolution upsetting the order of society. He was essentialy the poet of law and order as well as of progress; he held tenaciously to the great heritage of English tradition, and while he firmly believed in the divine scheme of things :

The old order changeth, yielding place to new
And God fulfils Himself in many ways
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world,

he was quite as firmly opposed to "raw haste" and rash experiments and everything as savoured of revolution.

Politically the age was striking a compromise between the growing tide of democracy and political freedom to the masses and the continuation of the old order of aristocracy. Tennyson presents this compromising spirit of the age in his poetry. While conceding the claims of coming democracy he upholds the old aristocracy. Recluse and aristocratic as he was, profoundly interested in common people and common things, and it is not the least significant feature of his work in the mass that along with *The Princess*, *Maud*, *The Idylls of the King*, it contains such things as *The May Queen*, *Enoch Arden* and *Dora*.

Patriotism and love for the country were the significant features of the age. The Victorians took pride in their nation and national glories. In Tennyson's poetry the sense of national pride and glory is well sounded. He represents English life and manners with utmost sincerity. *The Northern Farmer* is the true picture of Lincolnshire peasants and *The Northern Cobbler* and *Village Wife* are all national portraits depicting the rustic life of England. In *The English Idylls*, Tennyson reflects the ideals of widely different

types of English life. His praise for his own country is the expression of a Victorian patriot who considered his country superior to other countries of the world. Speaking of England Tennyson says :

It is the land that free men till,
That sober-suited freedom choose,
The land where girt with friends and foes,
A man may speak the thing he will,
A land of settled government,
A land of just and old renown.

Tennyson is eminently a Victorian in his concept of love and his high regard for domestic virtues. In his attitude towards women he is also a true Victorian. The Victorians did not approve of women's struggle for rights of franchise and equality with men. Women were created for looking after the household. This faith of the Victorians in the subordinate position of women is expressed by Tennyson in *The Princess* (1847), where in the suggests that woman's role is to be a good house wife and enjoy the blessed good life of the home. Woman's place was inside the house. Nature had ordained :

Man for the field and woman for the hearth,
Man for the sword and for the needle she,
Man to command and women to obey
All else confusion.

Coming to the subject of Love and Sex, the Victorians sought a compromise between unbridled licentiousness of previous ages and the complete negation of the functions and purposes of nature. The Victorians condemned illegal gratification of the sex urge. Tennyson reflects this spirit of the age by pointing out again and again in his love poems that true love can be found no-where else save in married life. He cannot even contemplate the possibility of any relation between man and woman other than the conjugal. He emphasises the cultivation of domestic virtues of the home. He idealises married life. The kind of love that Tennyson upholds and likes is well exemplified in *The Miller's Daughter.* It is a simple story of true sweet-hearting and married love, but raised into a steady and grave emotion worthy of a love built to last for life betwixt a man and a woman. This was the kind of love that Tennyson eulogises and the Victorians very much thanked the poet for presenting the higher sense of love. Tennyson concentrates very firmly upon the advantages of spiritual as opposed to physical love, and the age felt satisfaction in his delineation of love. The Victorian feeling is voiced by the poet when he says :

Arise and fly
The reeling Faun, the sensual feast,

Move upward, working out the beast,
And let the ape and tiger die.

This inevitably leads us to the 'Victorian priggishness', which Tennyson reflects in his longer poems.

The Victorians, who upheld moral virtues in domestic life, were at heart moralists. They had a particular fascination for moralising and teaching lessons of morality to the younger generations. In this respect Tennyson is the mouthpiece of the Victorians. In Tennyson's poetry there is a strong feeling for moral preaching and ethical edification. He is a moralist giving to his readers the proper guidance for the wise conduct of life. Tennyson, to quote Grierson, "was determined to add the tin kettle of the didactic intention to the tails of his poem." He turned to the Greek legends not so much for the sake of their beauty as for their ethical significance. The legendary *Ulysses* imparts the message of action and urges the readers :

To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

Tennyson believes that the aim of the poet should not be to provide aesthetic delight only. He is also a seer and a prophet, and as such his poetry should serve as an animating and enlivening force for his generation. In *The Palace of Art* the poet describes and condemns the spirit of aestheticism whose sole religion is the worship of Beauty and Knowledge for their own sake.

While, however, Tennyson's poetry is thus historically interesting on the social and political sides, it is even more important as a record of the intellectual and spiritual life of the time. A careful student of science and philosophy, he was deeply impressed by the far-reaching meaning of the new discoveries and speculation by which the edifice of the old thought had been undermined, and especially by the wise bearings of the doctrine of evolution; and at once sceptical and mystical in his own temper, he was peculiarly fitted to become the mouthpiece of his century's doubts, difficulties, and craving for the certainties of religious faith. The two voices of that century are prepetually heard in his work. In *In Memoriam*, more than in any contemporary piece of verse or prose, we may read of its great conflict of doubt and faith, while in many later poems as notably in *The Ancient Sage* we may see how the poet challenged the current materialism and asserted the eternal verities of God and immortality.

There remains more faith in honest doubt
Believe me than in half the creeds.

But Tennyson does not, there by surrender the claims of religion, God and soul. He triumphantly declares his faith in God and the immortality of the soul and in a life beyond death. He

advises the people of his age to cling to faith beyond all forms of faith, to trust in the large hope, to look to:

One far-off divine event
To which the whole creation moves.

In the *Higher Pantheism* he declares the supremacy of God and regards Him as the supreme controller of the universe:

God is law, say the wise: O soul, and let us rejoice
For if He thunder by law the thunder is yet his voice.

In every object of Nature and also in the sun, the moon and the stars the poet sees the vision of God:

The sun, the moon, the stars, the seas, the hills and the plains
Are not those a Soul ! the vision of Him who reigns.

One result of the advance of science was the almost disappearance of imagination and emotion from the life of the age. This lack of imagination is found in Tennyson's description of Nature, where nothing is left for the imagination and every object is minutely described with the precision and exactness of a scientist. In this respect Tennyson upholds the claim of science, though he sounds the final triumph of faith. It is in fact, after passing through the vale of pessimism brought forth by the theories of science in *Maud* and *Locksley Hall* that Tennyson arrives at the truth of religion and declares in *In Memoriam ;*

Oh yet we trust that some how good
Will be the final goal of ill.

The poet starts looking for some purpose behind the entire creation, and comes to the conclusion:

That nothing walks with aimless feet
That not one life shall be destroyed.

Tennyson thus gives expression to the scientific spirit of the age, the unrest that is brought in *Maud* and *Locksley Hall*, and ultimately arrives at the heaven of peace in *Higher Pantheism* and *In Memoriam.* In all these aspects it will be right for the future historian to treat Tennyson as a represent of the Victorian period. His finest poetry is undoubtedly "an illustrative record of the prevailing spirit, of the temperament, and to some degree of the national character of his period." In his verse he is truly "the glass of fashion and the mould of form" of the Victorian generation in the nineteenth century as Spenser was of the Elizabethan court, Milton of the Protectorate and Pope of the reign of Queen Anne.

Tennyson presented in his poetry all the essential features of Victorian life; the ideas and tastes, the inherited predilections belonging to his class and generation; moderation in politics,

refined culture, religious liberalism chequered by doubt, a lively interest in the advance of scientific discovery coupled with alarm, let it should lead us astray, attachments to ancient institutions, larger views of duty, of state towards its people, and increasing sympathy with poverty and distress–all these Victorian feelings find expression in Tennyson's poems.

Q. 32. Write a note on Tennyson as a Thinker with particular reference to his social outlook and attitude towards human life, his political views and his religious and philosophical thoughts.

Ans. "As a thinker" says E. Albert, "Tennyson lacked depth and originality." His social, political, religious, and philosophical thoughts were governed and dominated by the tendencies of his age. His thoughts fail to attract the modern readers for in them they scarcely find any spark of originality or progressive thinking. With these remarks let us now examine Tennyson's attitude towards different aspects and thoughts of his age.

Social outlook and attitude towards human life

In his social outlook and general attitude towards human life Tennyson was a conservative, an old fashioned gentleman, who looked with eyes of disfavour at any social progress that the masses might be able to achieve under the inspiring idealism of a democratic life. He was pretty conscious of the social probleme rising ou of the transformation of England from an agricultural country to an industrial country. The miseries and sufferings of the poor workers and labourers were before his eyes, but he was not sympathetically moved by their sufferings. Being the national poet, he apparently showed his concern with them and gave expression to his sympathy in such poems as *The Northern Cobbler*, *The Princess*, *Children's Hospital*, *Rizaph*, but his sympathy was merely lip sympathy never emerging from a sincere feeling for their distress. Instead of holding the perverse social system responsible for the sufferings of the poor and the down-trodden, Tennyson considered that the sins of men were ultimately responsible for their sufferings. The tragedy of Rizaph was the result of robbery, the calamities of O Enone were the outcome of a husband who was an adulterer. The remedy that the poet suggested for removing social sufferings was not any reform in the malpractices and wrong adjustments of social life, but a reform of the moral conduct of depraved human being. If a man strictly followed the law of morality and led a disciplined life, he could pass through life's voyage smoothly.

Tennyson' treatment of social evils such as unemployment, low wages, drunkenness, poverty, squalor was unsatisfactory. His

sympathies for the poor might have been genuine, but they have beenput in the mouths of weak characters like the neurotic lover of Maud or the young but dismal prig in *Locksley Hall.* The feelings expressed by them do not appear to be the spontaneous feelings of a poet's heart. Commenting on the unsatisfactory handling of social problems a critic has very aptly remarked: "When (Tennyson) brings himself face to face with the actual details of life lived in poverty, squalor, and crime, he is sullenly unhopeful. In fact, he looks upon the whole question from the point of view of the comfortable burgess, not of the poor man himself who stands the grim of the actual sacrifice. He gazes down from his sunny vantage ground of aesthetic refinement where no wind blows roughly. He never steps down into the thick of the struggle, and never makes those unjustly suffer feel that in him they have a comrade and a champion."

Tennyson's treatment of one single burning problem of the 'new woman' and her position in human society in *The Princess* (1847) clearly shows that he was not prepared to grant woman the same political and economic rights as man had in Victorian society. In his view the role of woman was to look after the household and enjoy happy married life rather than vex her head with political rights and responsibilities. We hear the poet singing :

Man for the field and woman for the hearth
Man for the sword and for needle she,
Man with the head and woman with the heart
Man to command and woman to obey.

Tennyson's general attitude towards the masses and the proper section of the community was one of supercilious disregard rather than genuine appreciation and sympathy. He had no real, warm and intimate sympathy with the common people. At heart Tennyson was an aristocratic English man and he insisted on maintaining social differences between the rich and the poor. He opposed the idea of levelling down all social distinctions. In fact he was more interested in kings, princes, men and women of intellectual power and delicate refinement than with mediocres and common people having no standard and intellectual brilliance in them. He was drawn to an environment of culture and good lineage, King Arthur was obviously his ideal of manhood. The women whom he adored were gentle, patient and enduring souls. "When he touched the lives of the poor there was just a suspicion of the average well meaning district visitor about his tone." If he was attracted by the rank and file, it was only with the people who were quaint and eccentric particularly in their old age. He could laugh with the Northern Farmer for he was an old man with eccentric feelings. Eccentric youth only roused his impatience. If he treated the youthful idealist as in *Locksley Hall,* he only made him a prig. He was not at all attracted by the hot-blooded

revolutionary, nor a visionary idealist. Elemental emotions of youth had no attraction for him. "In his general outlook on life, he grew to distrust more and more passion as an elemental force and strove to idealise and spiritualise it, whether as a force in political society or in sexual relation-ships."

In his attitude towards human life, Tennyson laid emphasis on law, order and discipline. Cultivation of moral values could alone bring about the salvation of human life. In his view :

Self-reverence, self knowledge, self-control
These three alone lead life to sovereign power.

Tennyson's Political Views

In his political views Tennyson was a conservative disdaining revolutionary changes in human society. While admitting the necessity of change, he insisted that change should he gradual and evolutionary in character. He was not at all in favour of a revolution that might upset the settled order of law and usher in the unhealthy rule of the mob. The sweeping tide of democracy bringing the common men to the forefront was looked upon with frowning eyes by the poet. He had no faith in democracy, equality or fraternity. He had something of a contempt for the people whom he designed as the 'rabblement.' He wrote in 'Locksley Hall' :

Slowly comes a hungry people as lion creeping nigher
Glares at one that nods and winks behind slowly dying fire.

He had none of the revolutionary enthusiasm of Byron, nor could he breathe a feeling of righteous indignation at the deplorable state of the people sunk in the mine of poverty and disease. He upheld the old order based on class division rather than accepted a classless society. The radical democratic passion of Shelley, who sought to obliterate class division in the main, found no response in Tennyson's breast. "He was" to quote Compton-Rickett, "an aristocrat in feeling, and though quick to resent the abuse of class privileges had no more confidence in the voice of the people than Carlyle himself. Tennyson believed in the Great Man theory, though he never confounded "Might with Right' to the same extent at the author of the *Latter Day Pamphlets.*"

Tennyson believed in law, order and settled government. He loved and liked England for it was :

A land of settled government
A land of first and old renown
Where freedom slowly broadens down
From precedent to precedent.

To quote Lyall "In Tennyson we have the Englishman's ingrained abhorrence of unruly disorder, the tradition of a State well balanced, of liberty fanced in by laws, of veneration for the past ; we have hatred of fanaticism in any shape, political or clerical, the distrust of popular impatience, the belief in the gradual betterment of human ills. When he was asked what politics he held, he answered characteristically, "I am of the same politics as Shakespeare, Bacon and every sane man."

Tennyson believed in the cultivation of one virtue, patriotism and love for England. In this respect he was a thorough-going Englishman. The sentiment of patriotism flourished best in his mind and we hear echoes of this patriotic love for his country in such lines as :

There is no land like England
Where'er the light of day be,
There are no hearts like English hearts,
Such hearts of Oak as they be

There is no land like England
Where'er the light of day be
There are no men like Englishmen
So tall and bold as they be.

She showed the bulldog qualities of the English race and the militant nationalism of a powerful nation in such poems as *The Charge of the Light Brigade*, *Ballad of the Fleet*, *The Defence of Lucknow*, *The Revenge*. "It is really a pity that Tennyson's patriotism should subserve so exclusively the trumpet and battle-axe and neglect the triumphs won outside of the battlefield."

In his foreign and imperial politics Tennyson had the vision of a narrow insular patriot who considered all foreigners as devils and all democratic movements on the continents as devilish. "The blind hysterics of the Celt" and "The blood on Seine" showed a grave narrowness of vision and limitation of sympathy. "It would have been better and the sweeter" says Compton-Rickett, "if Tennyson had understood other nationalities as well as he did his own race, since cosmopolitan sympathies strengthen in place of weakening the spirit of patriotism," But Tennyson could not grow out his narrow nationalism and insular patriotism and if he had any praise, it was for his country only which he expressed with the air of a proud Englishman :

It is the land that free men till
That sober-suited Freedom choose
The land, where girt with friends or foes
A man may speak the thing he will.

Tennyson's Religious and Philosophical Outlook

"Harm has been done by those who have spoken of Tennyson's philosophy whether to exalt or belittle him," says

Bradley, "for he was not a philosopher, any more than Wordsworth was or Browning or Meredith, though he shows, I think, more signs then they of the gift that makes a philosopher." As a religious and philosophical thinker Tennyson has a expressed his thoughts on soul, God, union of the soul with the Divine Being, immortality of the soul, progress of the human race and the ultimate destiny of man and nature in the universe.

Tennyson lived at a time when the conflict between religion and science was coming to a head. Materialism was growing apace and shaking the very roots of religious faith and morality. People were fascinated more and more by the artificial glamour of material progress. Many religious men were tottering in their faith in face of the revolutionary and evolutionary theories of science. "Tennyson, essentially a religious man at heart, was also affected by the new theories of science particularly by the theory of Evolution propounded by Darwin. The scientific ideas of the age affected him. "No poet was more exercised by religious problems than he ; and no poet was more sensitive to scientific thought than he. But his attitude is an attitude of a compromise ; he propounds a *via media* between the materialistic science of his day and dogmatic Christianity." Tennyson's attitude was neither purely scientific nor purely religious. He equally welcomed the influence of historical Christianity and modern scientific thoughts. He stated :

There remains more faith in honest doubt
Believe me than in half the creeds.

In an age when more of Science was colouring man's thoughts and demolishing his faith in God and His supremacy in the universe, Tennyson had the courage to declare that God was the creator of the universe and the reflection of His personality was visible in all the physical and spiritual aspect of life. Man's soul was a part of the divine soul and had its being from the soul of God. The ultimate redemption of the human soul lay in its final merger with the divine soul of the universe. Man's birth upon the earth marked his division from the Divine :

Earth, these solid stars, this weight of body and limb
Are they not the sign and symbol of thy division from Him ?

On one occasion Tennyson is reported to have said to a friend,

"There is something that watches over us and our individuality endures; that is my faith, and that is all my faith."

Man should strive to be once again with the Almighty God and thereby attain the goal of union with the soul of the universe. This union of the human soul with the divine soul could be possible if man followed the path of morality, truth, righteousness and

virtue. Only a life of morality and virtue could once again bring about the union of the human soul with divine soul, and his great effort in *In Memoriam* had been to prove that the dust returns to the dust, but the divine spark in man seeks to unite with the divine soul of the universe. He could never believe that the individual world may one day come to an end.

Tennyson confidently asserted that at the back of the universe there was God, who ruled over the entire world. In the *Higher Pantheism* he made his position very clear when he says:

The sun, the moon, the stars, the seas, the hills and the plains,
Are not these, O soul, the vision of Him who reigns.

Tennyson went a step further and admitted divine intervention in all the affairs of man. It was a debatable question whether God was in any way interested or Interfered in the affairs of man. Scientists were not prepared to accept any divine intervention in human affairs; Tennyson upheld the view that God was interested in the affairs of man and His power was visible in human life. There was something like divine help anger which human-beings felt in their lives. "There is something that watches over us, and our individuality endures; that's my faith, and that's all my faith", he is reported to have said on one occasion to a friend. In the *Ancient Sage* we have the feeling that the activities of human li e were the result of the Divine presence sustaining the entire sýstem of being :

If the Nameless should withdraw from all
Thy frailty counts most real, all thy world
Might vanish like the shadow in the dark.

All the visible things were the sings and shadows of the invisible, the intimations of some eternal power or Divinity. If He withdraws Himself from the objects of the world, the entire cosmos shall vanish like a shadow vanishing in the darkness.

Tennyson believed that so long as the universe was governed by God, the progress of the human rece was certain, though the course of progress might be chequered. Progress would be slow, but ultimately man would rise to heights of his spiritual glory. In the posthumous volume he worte of a time when the moars of the earth which now whirls through space would have grown 'sphere' music, and man would evolve to higher heights :

While the races flower and fade
Prophet eyes may catch a glory slowly gaining on the shade
Till the people all are one, and all their voice's blend in choric
Hallellujah to the Maker, 'It is finished, man is Made.'

But this hope for the ultimate perfectability of man was by no means the main element of Tennyson's faith. The main pillars

of his faith were his belief in the guidance of the universe by a God who is love, in the revelation of God's love and the divine law through Christ; in the immortality of the human spirit leading to some kind of 'closing' with the divine personality, and in the freedom of the human will.

"Tennyson has been called a mystic; It would be more correct to say he was mystical" says Compton-Rickett; for we not find in Tennyson the kind of mysticism we notice in Vaughan, George Herbert and Blake. He was at his best "a rationalist with a tenacious strain of mysticism in his nature. No thorough-going mystic would have dealt at such length and with such significant emphasis upon the difficulties of raligious faith; no thorough-going rationalist would have tried to solve the difficulties by claiming for the intuition of the heart, a way out of the morass of scepticism." The only trace of mysticism to be found in his poetry is his faith, in the power of intuition to solve all difficulties coming in the way of a man of faith. In his mystical way Tennyson thought that intuition could solve all the problems of life.

Tennyson was through and through a religious minded man. He believed that "somehow good will be the final goal of life." It was not a philosophy of faith so much as philosophy of hope. The poet hoped that things would take return for the good. Tennyson had to struggle hard for his faith against Personal doubt raised by Science. His ultimate faith was :

That God, which ever lives and loves
One God, one law, one element,
The one far-off divine event
To which the whole creation moves.

Tennyson had certain philosophical thoughts which he had expressed with great force in *Ulysses* and *In Memoriam*. He believed in action and *Ulysses* is a standing monument in the glorification of action even in the face of death and decay. He laid emphasis on 'to strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.' He advocated pursuit of knowledge and higher values of life :

To follow knowledge like a sinking star
Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.

Tennyson laid equal emphasis on the cultivation of love. He conceived of God as the embodiment of love. *In Memoriam* opens with the line :

Strong Son of God, immortal love.

As a philosopher Tennyson believed in the freedom of Human will. In *In Memoriam* he expressed his faith in free will in the following line :

Our wills are ours we know not how.

He propagated the doctrine of free will because without granting the principle of the free will, the doctrine of moral responsibility would be meaningless.

Another aspect of his philosophy was that 'men may rise on stepping, stones of their dead selves to higher things.' This is well expressed in *In Memoriam*. Tennyson believed in the gospel of progress and advancement in human life. He believed in evolution rather than revolution. It was his faith that man and things were imperceptibly aspiring to a higher state. This evolutionary process of moral progress is the sheet anchor of Tennyson's transcendentalism. His faith in life beyond death is expressed in *Sir Galahad*, *Enoch Arden*, and *Locksley Hall Sixty Years After*.

Q. 33. Write a note on Tennyson as an Artist touching upon his achievement as—(1) A Metrical artist, (2) A Pictorial artist, (3) An Artist in general.

Or

Do you agree with the view that Tennyson in spite of his merits as a thinker was essentially a poet and an artist ?

Ans. Tennyson was primarily a poet and an artist, and it is as a poet and skilled craftsman in verse that he will be remembered in future years to come. No doubt, his poetry is a clear reflection of his thoughts on the social, economic and political problems of his day, yet his fame does not rest on his thoughts, but on his achievements as an Artist. As a thinker he was not of the first order. E. Albert says. "As a thinker Tennyson lacked depth and originality." Harold Nicholson points out. "Tennyson was unfortunately a very inferior intellectual thinker." His thoughts on the political, social, and religious problems do not have any depth, profoundity and originality. All his thoughts are of his age and were commonly shared by the people of his time. The merit of Tennyson lies in giving them a poetic form and shape. There is nothing impressive about them. In spite of his treatment of the problems of democracy, rights and position of women, commercial aristocracy, immortality of the soul, the supremacy of God as creator of the universe, we do not seem to be satisfied with what he says except in a general way. Some of his views. as, for example, on the position and privilege of women and the common people have become outmoded and unprogressive. They have no appeal to the modern men and women. Hence if the greatness of Tennyson is to be judged purely on the basis of his thoughts and ideas on the problems of his age, he will not be able to occupy a significant place in the galaxy of English poets. We will call him a chronicler of his time, who just chose to be a poetic bard

of his age and nothing more. But that is not the case with Tennyson. In spite of his being a Victorian poet voicing in poetry the hopes and aspirations of the people of his times, Tennyson enjoys his fame and name. It is not by what he 'said' but by how he said it that Tennyson won for himself a host of admirers. It is the manner, the poetic style, and the skilled craftsmanship of the poet that have earned for him a lasting place among the poets of his country. It is by virtue of his qualities as a consummate artist that he is remembered and adored to-day. R C. Jebb writes. "The gifts by which Tennyson has and will keep his place among the great poets of England are pre-eminently those of an artist." R. Brimley Johnson says, "Tennyson was before all things a flawless artist."

As a Metrical Artist

Tennyson's mastery of rhythm and metre is commendable. Here is the absolute sway of metre, compelling every rhyme and measure needful to the thought, here are sinuous alliterations, unique and varying breaks and pauses, winged flight and falls, the glory of sound and colour everywhere present. From the beginning of his poetic career Tennyson exhibited his interest in metrical experiments. His first volume, *Poem, Chiefly Lyrical* published in 1830, at the age of twenty one, showed that the poet had mastered the principles of English prosody and had understood how those principles could actually be applied in poetic composition. In these early poems every variety of rhythm was dexterously employed, though the 'rising' foot was more common than the 'falling'. Both dactyls and anapaests were freely used to give the air of rhythm, speed and lightness.

Tennyson's second volume of poems published in 1842 indicated that the poet's grasp of structure and rhythm was steadily increasing. *The Lady of Shallot* was the triumph of metrical art. The entire poem was written in a stanza of seven lines, the first four all with the same rhyme-ending, and a refrain after the third and fourth lines. It was a difficult metre but Tennyson handled it with great lightness and freedom. *The Two Voices*, in the form of a dialogue between the temper and the man bent upon suicide, was composed in a stanza of three short lines with a single rhyme and sledge hammer regularity which gave to the dialogue a great force. In the *Lotos-Eaters* the skill of the poet matured. The introductory lines are in the Spenserian Stanza 'The choric song' is written in iambic lines which very in length between three feet seven feet. The rhythm is considerably manipulated by the inversion of iambics into trochees. The poem forestalls the method of *Maud*. The rhythm is adapted successfully to the fluctuating emotions of the theme. The movement of the lines in conformity with the thoughts of mariners. In adjusting the thoughts with the rhythm of the lines Tennyson achieved great success.

In *In Memoriam* Tennyson perfected the stanza of four iambic lines of four feet each with enclosed rhythm (ab - ba). Instead of being monotonous the stanza proved to be eminently successful. The quatrain stanza of *In Memoriam* had earlier been used by Lord Herbert of Cherbury and by Ben Jonson, but Tennyson stole a march over them by manipulating the rhythm.

In *Maud* Tennyson produced a lyrical monologue of 1200 lines representing the story of love, death and madness. The metre of *Maud* is iambic but it is plentifully varied with anapaests. The lines vary in length from six feet to three and the rhyme scheme is exceedingly fluid and so well managed that, although the rhyme is hardly ever obtrusive, it never fails to act as an effective link in the chain of sound. By these means Tennyson evolved a form of extraordinary speed, fluency and adaptability.

Tennyson employed blank verse in *The Princess*, *English Idyll* and *Idylls of the King*. Blank verse had been used by the Elizabethans and by Milton. Tennyson's blank verse has a natural freedom, simplicity and tenderness. When his theme is reflective and oratorical,the blank verse becomes, "melodious, sonorous, variously paused and felicitously darwn into paragraph. In narrative pieces like *Morte D' Arthur* it has strength and condensation whereas in *Ulysses* it has epic grandeur, sublimity and slow movement." "Tennyson's blank verse" says Charles Tennyson in *Six Tennyson's Essays* "has not the majesty of Milton's, nor the rhetorical splendour and freedom of Shelley's, nor the natural eloquence and dignity of Wordsworth's; but it has striking merits of its own chief among which are, I think, its amazing flexibility, and its power of achieving, through rhythm and vowel music, a lyrical, singing quality which no other poet has attained in the same degree." "Tennyson's blank verse" says Compton-Rickett, "is inexpressibly finer in quality than any attempted by the poets of the Romantic Revival, and to rival it one must go back to Milton."

Tennyson's great merit as a metrical artist lies in three directions. In the first place he knew the art of adapting sound to sense. The movement of his lines exactly reflects the sense. This is presented in a remarkable manner in the opening lines of the *Lotos Eaters*, where an atmosphere of sleepiness and drowsiness is being produced by the use of drowsy and soft syllables. Secondly, Tennyson was the master in the subtle and pervading employment of alliteration This exhibits his manual dexterity, but alliteration is employed with rare skill by the poet :

The moan of doves in immemorial elms,
And murmuring of innumerable bees. (*The Princess*)

Lastly, Tennyson's mastery in vowel-music is unparalleled in Victorian poetry. Dexterous manipulation of vowel sounds constitutes Tennyson's most original contribution to the harmonies

of English language. He took great pains to avoid harsher guturals and sibilants from his verse. It was his perfection of vowel balance which made his poetry musical. It was by the shifting of the stress, by the interchanges of vowel sounds and by the use of alliteration, that Tennyson was able to very the inherent monotony of *In Memoriam*, and adds richness to the melody of *Lotos Eaters* The sense of music is equally conspicuous in the melody of his diction. The mere sound of his words and phrases lingers long in the mind. This is, in the main, due to his selection of melodious vowels and liquid consonants, and also to his skilful use of alliteration. Lastly his use of onomatopoeic words enhances the sweet harmony of his verse. An example of Tennyson's use of vowel-music is given from *Lotos Eaters* to show how deftly he used this device to create music in poetry :

And thro' mossy ivies creep,
And in the stream the long-leaved flowers weep,
And from the craggy ledge the poppy hangs in sleep.

As a musician in words Tennyson will always be loved. His is the song the sirens sing. He carries his measures like a flowing stream through the ups and downs of rhythmic scales. His melodies vibrating and quivering sweetly resound in the ears, and the high soaring flights of his rapturous chants entrance the hearts of the readers.

Tennyson was one of the most skilful metrists among English poets and could turn out fascinating exercises in odd rhythms. He could write in 1868 such a poem as *Lucretious*, the most daring and complex of his dramatic monologues. And the same poet could write the rollicking narrative ballad *The Revenge* and the two lively satirical dialect monologue's *Northern Farmer : Old Style* and *Northern Farmer ; New Style.* If he had lacked complexity, and at times emotional discipline, he could show himself master of the simple mood-lyric, a brilliant manipulator of language to the ear, and a conscientious craftsman who could work up a remarkably high polish to his work. He remains one of the most skilful and within the area he chose to cultivate one of the most professionally competent.

As a Pictorial Artist

Tennyson was a great pictorial artist. He was gifted with unrivalled powers of picturing a scene, a landscape, a person in words marked with clarity and vividness. This art of pictorial painting was learnt by the poet quite early in his life by keeping Keats's pictorial paintings as his models. His art was essentially picturesque and he used words as the painter employs his brush for conveying the impression of a scene in all its vivid glory and colour Steadman's significant remark in *Victorian Poets* regarding Tennyson's pictorial powers is worth quoting. He says, "Leaving the architecture of Tennyson's poetry and coming to the

sentiment which it seeks to express we are struck at once by the fact that an idyllic or picturesque mode of conveying that sentiment is the one natural to the poet, if not the only one permitted by his limitations." Leaving aside Shakespeare, Spenser, Keats no poet was able to draw such gorgeous pictures of landscapes as Tennyson did. Nearly all Tennyson's poems, even the simplest, are rich in ornate descriptions of natural and scenes. "His method" says Albert. "is to seize upon appropriate details, dress them in expressive and musical phrases, and thus throw a glistening image before the reader's eye."

The Princess is rich in pictures of beauty and loveliness. The finest pictorial painting of landscape is seen in *The Lotos-Eaters* where the poet draws the picture of the island in all the richness of nature's scenery. It was a land of streams in which the Lotos-Eaters found themselves :

A land of streams ! some, like a downward smoke
Slow-dropping veils of thinn'st lawn, did go ;
And some thro' wavering lights and shadows broke
Rolling a slumbrous sheet of faam below.

The Lady of Shallot is rich in splendid descriptions. The opening lines of this poem vividly catch the scene :

On either side the river lie,
Long fields of barley and of rye,
That clothe the world and meet the sky
And thro' the fold the road runs by
To many-towered Camelot.

His pictures of Nature in *In Memoriam* are quite significant and reflect the calmness of grief and provide an appropriate ground to human sentiment :

Calm is the morn without a sound,
Calm as to suit a calmer grief
And only through the faded leaf
The chestnut pattering to the ground.

Tennyson remained throughout his career as a poet the superb master of imaginative descriptions. His *Eagle* is a poem of six lines, but it is a fine piece of pictorial painting. It leaves a picture which cannot be forgotten :

He clasps the crag with crooked hands
Close to the sun in lonely lands
Ring'd with the azure world, he stands,
The wrinkled see beneath him crawls!
He watches from his mountain walls
And like a thunderbolt ho falls.

A Dream of Fair Woman is almost wholly composed of imaginative descriptions. *O Enone* has fine array of pictures, like that suggested by the scenery of the Pyreness :

The long brook falling this the clov'n ravin
In cataract after cataract to the sea.

As an Artist in general

Tennyson was an artist of a high order, and he cultivated the art of poetic composition with great labour and .industry. Like Keats he was a conscious and deliberate artist spending considerable time and energy in perfecting the from and the style of poetic expression. His ideal of poetry was that it should be simple, sensuous and pictorial. *The Poet's Mind* reveals his conception of his art as a poet. In his view poetry should be transparent, flowing, and crystal clear like the waters of a limpid stream. In conformity with his principles he developed his artistic qualities in a particular pattern of thought emphasizing on the necessity of cultivating the quality of simplicity, lucidity, charity, sublimity, unity, and completeness.

In Tennyson's art the first thing that strikes us is *simplicity*. Nothing was ever done by the poet for effect. His style has the stamp of simplicity, though simplicity never borders on the land of baldness. "Vital sincerity or living correspondence between idea and form, that absolute necessity for all fine art as for noble life, was his, and it is contained in his simplicity."

Clarity and lucidity are other traits of Tennyson's art. He never involved himself like Browning in the obscure depths of metaphysics and theology. Stepford A. Brooke rightly says, "Deliberately he did not attempt to write about that which he could not express with lucidity of thought and form. He determined to be clear."

A sense of beauty and adoration of the beautiful aspect of nature and human life characterised Tennyson's art. He was a votary of beauty. He possessed an unfailing instinct for form in beauty. He had the power of shaping beauty and loveliness in nature and human life. Tennyson's adoration of beauty was very much like that of Keats. His cult of beauty is embodied in three poems—*The Poet*, *The Poet's Mind* and *The Poet's Song*. He is highly sensitive to all forms of beauty--physical as well as spiritual, and is a true artist in the adoration of beauty.

Tennyson's art has the stamp of sublimity, stateliness and dignity about it. Nothing is written in a plebeian style. He avoids all that is commonplace. and presents ordinary ideas in a dignified way. He is a fastidious artist who believes in perfect finish. "Tennyson was one of those poets who, like Milton and Wordsworth, consider themselves as consecrated spirits. This sense of

their vocation makes them reverence their work, rather than themselves. It imparts stateliness to their verse, gives it a moral virtue, a spiritual strength, and emerges in a certain grandeur or splendour of style."

One of the greatest qualities of Tennyson as an artist is that his poems, especially shorter ones are marked with a note of unity of impression and soundness of construction. Though Tennyson's longer poems may be wanting in this unity of impression and construction, yet the lighter pieces, like *Ulysses*. *The Two Voices*, *The Vision of Sin* owe a great deal of their charm to the unity of impression which they convey. "The best proof of the great advance which Tennyson had made in the art of construction is to be found in *The Lotos-Eaters*, a piece which can hardly be paralleled except in Spenser or in Thomson's *Castle of Indolence*.

Tennyson's exquisite polish, chiselled phrases, and perfection of form are remarkable qualities of his art. "With the exception of Gray", says Grierson "English poetry had produced nothing since Milton that is so obviously the result of strenuous and unwearied pursuit of perfection of form." He gave considerable thought to the art of expression. and he succeeded in coining phrases like "jewels five words long." with the dexterity of a skilled craftsman He spared no pains to impart the best finish and perfection to his pieces of poetic art by revising, re-writing original gift, of Spenser in uniform excellence and grasp of a huge subject, of Shakespeare in universality, in height and depth, of Milton in grandeur and lovely sublimity, of Wordsworth in ethical weight and grip of nature behind the veil of Shelley in unearthliness, and of Keats is voluptuous syontaneity, yet deserves to be ranked with the best of these except Shakespeare only in virtue of its astonishing display of poetic art."

Q. 34. Write a short essay on Tennyson as a Lyric Poet.

Or

Comment on Tennyson's lyrical excellence.

Ans. Tennyson was by temperament a lyrical poet. He had been endowed with all those qualities which have made him the supreme lyric poet of his country, but unfortunately the poet did not strictly follow the lyric force of his genius and allowed his lyric energy to be obscured by less vital elements. Instead of remaining a singer voicing forth the subjective feelings that welled in his heart, he chose to be a dramatist, a narrative poet, an ethical teacher, and a communal bard. This association of Tennyson with other energies (ethical, theological, didactic) along with his lyrical energy certainly bedimmed the glory of his lyrical

genius, and made him more of a philosophic thinker than a pure lyric poet. Had he realised that what he *felt* was infinitely more important than what he *thought*, he would have been another Shelley or Swinburne in English lyric poetry. But Tennyson was forced by circumstances into fifty years of unnatural objectivity. "He chose the easier and more prosperous course" says Harold Nicholson, "of becoming the Laureate of his age. He subordinated the lyric to the instructional. His poetry thereby has lost one of its potential value."

In spite of the fact that Tennyson allowed his lyric genius to be dominated by philosophic thoughts, yet his lyric flow could not be completely ebbed, and from time to time the poet composed songs and lyrics of exquisite beauty and loveliness. The restraining force of caution and philosophy could not chill the ardour of his soul, and lyrics and songs continued to flow from his pen right up from the age of seventeen to the ripe old age of eighty. Tennyson could keep up his power for melody and song even to the age of eighty. During the long span of his poetic career he produced such fine pieces of lyricism as *Marina*, *Oriana*. *Fatima*, *Merman and Mermaid*. *The Miller's Daughter*, *The Lotos Easters*, *Break-Break-Break*. *The Dream of Fair Women*, *Locksley Hall*, *The Brook*, *The splendour falls on castle walls*, *Tears*, *Idle Tears*, *Come into the Garden—Maud*, *O Swallow*, *Swallow*. These songs and lyrics attract us by their luscious melody, their tilting music, their Aeolic chiselling of phrase and their exquisite finish. These lyrics are masterpieces of his genius. Commenting on the greatness of these lyrics and songs a critic has aptly pointed out, "Tennyson's genius is lyrical. He has the great gift of song, though without the rapture that sometimes attends it. Whatever he touches, he transmutes into a sweet melody, simple and personal, or rich and sonorous."

Tennyson's lyrics are extremely melodious and musical. The poet has a trained and refined ear for music and metrical harmony, and the metrical flow of his lines is completely free from the defects of rhythm and melody. He knows the art of harmonising the sense with the sound of the words employed in his lyrics. Dunn rightly writes, "He is a great poet because he is a great artist, a master of words and metres, a maker of magical music."

This lyrical gift is no-where so well employed as in giving expression to a sense of loss, recollected after the occasion of grief, and brooded over intellectual anguish and stoical suffering. This feeling mingles with the voice of the sea or the mists of the air or finds illustration in many pictures from Nature. In a more joyous mood the poet enables us to see the idyllic side of English life—its quite rural scenery, rich perfumes of summer or the rare tints of autumn.

Tennyson's lyrics and songs, in-spite of all the eulogy that they have won from critics and admirers of his poetry, cannot be placed in the first rank of lyrics and songs. As Albert points out, "On the whole his nature was too self-conscious and perhaps his life to regular and prosperous to provide a background for the true lyrical intensity of emotion." The lyrics of Tennyson, with all their charm, hardly scale the radiance of a lyric by Sappho or Sophocles. They fail to move us and strike a sympathetic chord in our heart. Even some of the lyrics of pathos and mourning fail to move us. Oliver Elton is of the opinion that Tennyson is more at home in classical lyrics—ode like or commemorative—carefully concerted pieces, the short or long with full rolling lines than in the briefer spontaneous kind. Rarely his songs attain the same intensity as the songs of Burns, Scott and Shelley do. Their pathetic strains do not move us to pity and despair. Even the music of Tennyson's loveliest songs is somewhat langurous. It is :

Music that gentlier on the spirit lies
Than tir'd eyelids upon tir'd eyes.

The music is a little cloying. The songs fail to appeal to our feelings. No one can dispute the feeling of Tennyson's lyric, but it is usually clothed in such subtle graces of fancy, in such artful cadences, in such enamelled colouring, that it strikes the imagination more than the heart. Even the music fails to attract, for it appears the music of recitation, of memory, of thought, rather than song. The songs of Burns as 'My love is like a red, red rose' or 'The devil came fidyling through the town' are more attractive and appealing than the songs of Tennyson. In them we feel the lack of feeling and genuine emotion which we come across in Shakespeare's songs such as 'Full Fathom five. Thy Father lies' or 'Tell me where is Fancy bred.' Tennyson's songs and lyrics thus fail to appeal to our heart with the same intensity and emotional force as the lyrics of Burns and Shelley appeal to us. But comparisons are odious. In-spite of the shortcomings in his art Tennyson is a lyrical poet and some of his lyrics and songs will continue to provide a feast of delight to the readers for they have at least the gift of melody in them.

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7
Browning

Q. 35. Give your estimate of Browning as the poet of love.

Ans. Browning is one of the greatest love poets in English poetry. He is not concerned with divine love or the love of God, love of country, love of family, but with only one kind of love—the love between man and woman. He has produced a host of poems dealing with love on the physical plain. "The love poems of Browning" says Stopford A. Brooke, "do not mean those poems which deal with absolute love or the love of the ideas as truth and beauty or love of mankind or country, but it *means the isolating passion of one sex the other chiefly in youth whether moral or immoral.*" Browning's poems of love give expression to all phases of physical love varying from the fierce animal passion of Ottima in *Pippa Passes* to the romantic love or Queen worship of *The Last Ride Together* and *Rudel To The Lady of Tripoli.*

Browning's love poetry is intensely realistic in character. A man loves a woman not for her spiritual qualities, but for her physical charm and passion. Browning's heroes love their beloveds because they are women with passion, having all the persuasive charm of winning ladies. In short, a man loves a woman not because she is a goddess, but because she is a real woman, "with her curls, he dented chin, her little tricks of speech, all the causeless laughters, the little private jokes and common memories that are the—stuff of intimacy. That is the real thing, and in that kind of love poetry, Browning is a master." Realism is the central working force of Browning's love poetry. The imagery of his love poetry is that of suburban streets, straws, garden rakes, medicine bottles, pianos, and fashionable furcoats. "Browning's love poetry is the finest in the world because it does not talk about raptures and ideals and gates of heaven" says G. K. Chesterton, "but about window panes and gloves and garden walls. It does not deal with abstractions. It is the truest of all love poetry, because it does not speak much about love. It awakens in every man the memories of that immortal instant when *common and dead things* had meaning beyond the power of any millionaire to compute." The realistic imagery of *A Lover's Quarrel* exhibits Browning's pre-occupation with real things of the world.

Browning *intellectualises* the passion of love. The lovers of Browning provide a psychological analysis of their love, and this analysing and psychologising of love is present in *The Last Ride Together and Porphyria's Lover.* His lovers indulge in dissecting and discussing their love. In Browning's poetry of love there is

nothing of that deep, tormented, sensual strain that at once attracts or repels in John Donne; but there is the same activity of intellect and the same rush of thought which we come across in poems like *Twickenham Garden*.

Browning mostly dwells on the power wielded by women in sex-life. He does not emphasise the physical charms of his women, nor does he introduce like Keats 'light feet and creamy breasts' but he lays stress on the power of women to transform and transfigure man's life. This aspect of Browning's women is well brought out in *By the Fire Side*, *Evelyn Hoye* and *Andrea Del Sarto*.

Browning employs the dramatic method in the presentation of his love-poems. Pure lyricism in love is subdued by the dramatic force with which the reactions of his men and women are presented in his poems of love like *The Last Ride Together*. Most of the love poems of Browning are in the form of Dramatic monologues, and even the lyrics have a dramatic touch behind them.

Browning's love poetry is both complex and comprehensive dealing with cases of successful as well as unsuccessful love. Of the poems whose subject is physical love, about two-third represent the feelings of mam, and one-third the feelings of woman. The love poems thus deal more with man's feelings than woman's. The love of man is partly successful and partly unsuccessful and as such some poems are poems of successful love, while others are marked with a note of despair. Among the successful poems of love we have *By the Fireside*, *Resp ctability* and *One Word More*. Poems marked with a no e of failure and despair are *Love amon the Ruins*, *In a Gondola*, *Porphyria's Lover*, *A Lover's Quarrel*, *Love in a Life*, *One Way of Love*.

Poems dealing with the love of women can also be divided into two parts— (1) Successful love poems. (2) Unsuccessful love poems. The successful love poems in which women have succeeded are *Parting at Morning*, *A Woman's Last Word*, *Any Wife to Any Husband*, *Count Gismond*. Poems in which women have met buffets of fortune are *The Laboratory* and *In a Year*. Love poems dealing with woman's passion lack that width of view and intellectual power which we notice in poems dealing with the love of men.

All the love poems of Browning whether dealing with cases of successful love or failure in love end on a note of optimism and triumph. The triumphant note is nicely sounded in the concluding lines of *Evelyn Hope*, where the old man puts a scroll in the "sweet cold hand" of his dead beloved hoping that some day when she awakens she "will remember and understand." The lover in *Last Ride Together* is optimistic and the poem ends on a note of hope:

What if we still ride on, we two
With life for old yet new,
Changed not in kind but in degree,

The instant made eternity,
And Heaven just prove that I and she
Ride, ride, together. for ever ride?

Browning lays emphasis on married love and like Donne he is the chosen poet of wedded love. This is well presented in *Bv the Fireside*. The motto of Browning's love poetry is well put in the beautiful stanza from *By the Firesibe*—one of the noblest and truest he ever penned:

Oh, the little more and how much it is!
And the little less, and what worlds away!
How a sound shall quicken content to bliss
Or a breath suspended the blood's best play
And life be a proof of this.

Compton-Rickett has beautifully summed up Browning's position as a love poet in the following words—"Certain aspects of love have been more finely rendered by other poets; but in range of matter Browning has no superior. There are abysses of tragic horror, agonies of sense and spirit, at which he took no more than a glimpse. It was not in his nature to dwell on them. His splendid vitality and buoyant hopefulness recoiled from them. His art as a poet of love suffers limitations to that extent, but the underlying inspiration is the greater. For his outlook on love is the outlook of a man who puts it in front of any other thing in life as a force for sanctifying and strengthening the soul."

Q. 36. Write a note on Browning's philosophy of life with particular reference to his optimism.

Ans. Robert Browning did not belong to any school of philosophy nor he was the disciple of any philosopher. He had thought deeply and calmly on the problems of life, and had come to certain conclusions about the values of spiritual and physical life. Browning's conclusions about life have a philosophical touch, and the thinking and intellectual element in them is of a high order. The study of his philosophic poems like *Rabbi Ben Ezra* and *Abt Vogler* and *Asolando* bring out his philosophical thoughts in a clear and unmistakable manner. The general impression left on our mind after reading Browning's poems of philosophy is one of optimism and hope. Almost all the Victorian poets had imbibed the despair and melancholy of the Romantic Movement of the earth 19th Century. Browning was the only Victorian poet who was not influenced by the nostalgia and despair of the Romantic poets. Browning's optimism was thus not conditioned by his age. It was an act of faith and inner conviction with him. "His optimism was not Victorian ; no other Victorian poet of any significance

was optimistic. The typical Victorian literary men was either a prophet or a worrier or a doubter, and none of these are optimistic type. Browning blew away some of the lilies and languors that the Romantic Movement had bequeathed to England. There were, however, other Victorian poets who were determined to bring them back." It was Browning's effort in poetry to keep away that melancholy and gloominess which had overshadowed the minds and thoughts of his contemporaries. He was ever hopeful and optimistic of a better order in life and a better world to come, and it is this optimism of Browning that is the crowning glory of his poetry.

Browning took for granted the existence and supremacy of God as the creator and governor of the universe, and was not prepared to doubt the existence of God even for a moment. He considered God as an all pervading Deity, an essence always partially but never wholly revealed in the creative energy of Nature and the aspirations of man. Pauline's lover says : "I saw God everywhere—I felt presence." Paracelsus declares his faith in the Supreme Being which, in fact, is Browning's personal faith about God :

Thus He dwells in all
From life's minute beginning's at last to man.

and

God is seen God
In the star, in the stone, in the flesh, in the s ul and the cloud.

Browning did not conceive of God as a cruel and tyrannical being unmindful of the lot of the created universe, or a sinister intelligence bent on punishing mankind. He conceived of God as a benignant and sympathetic power halping men in their endeavours if they reposed faith in Him and His mercy :

God made all the creatures and gave them
Our love and our fear
We and they are His children
One family here.

The second principle that Browning took for granted is the immortality of the soul. He could never believe that death brings the end of the divine spark irradiating human life. God is the potter and the soul is the clay. Both of them endure for ever. This faith of the poet is expressed in *Rabbi Ben Ezra* :

Fool ! All that is at all,
Last ever, past recall !
Earth changes, but thy soul and God stand sure
Time's wheel runs back or stops : Potter and clay endure.

Every thinker has to answer one significant question—what is the end and aim of life ? For what objective have we been sent to the world ? Browning squarely faced this question. In *Paracelsus* he dealt with this problem. He considered that the aim of life was to acuire power, and since the power of knowledge was the mightiest of all powers, one should pursue it with ardour and enthusiasm. But soon he realised that mere love for power, even for the power of knowledge, was not sufficient, unless it was accompanied with Love. Knowledge by itself was arid, and barren unless it was joined with the force of Love. As Young puts it "Knowledge, at first (as an Paracelsus) a glorious gift, afterwards lost its glamour in his eyes : so far from conceding that knowledge could belittle its capacity to deal even with the primary impressions of sense ; such is the drift of those polemical poems, like *La Saisiaz*, of his later years. *But love, which kindles and exalts both power and knowledge, he deems to be the quality by which man touches the infinite, the quality common to God and men.*" Love allied with knowledge and power ought to be the main quest of the human soul. This conviction is set-forth in the words :

Love preceding power,
And with much power, always much more love.

At another place, the poet reiterated his faith in the same doctrine by pointing out :

O world, as God had made it, all is beauty
And knowing this is Love, and Love is duty.

Browning believed that the world with all its glories and triumphs, its joys and fears, was a fitting place for man's actions and activities. Browning was not an ascetic who summed the world, nor a crose-grained man to regard the universe as a vale of sorrow and tears, 'where to think is to be full of sorrow' ; 'where beauty cannot hold its lustrous eyes, nor new lovs pine at them beyond tomorrow'. He had a genuine interest in the world and human life, which he considered to be real and good. "He thought the world good because he had found so many things that wera good in it—religion, the nation, the nation, the family, the social class." In *Fra Lippo Lippi* we are told that :

This world is no blot for us
Nor blank, it means intensely and means good.

Again in the same poem we have another statement, rec ognising the godness of the world :

The world and life's too long too pass for a dream.

In *Saul* the poet says :

How good is man's life, the mere living, how fit to empoly
Ail the heart and the soul and the senses forever in joy.

Having clearly defined the goal and end of man's life Browning examined wether it was possible for man to achieve success in the attainment of his ideals, He was confornted directly with the problem of Evil, for every time man strove to realise perfection and complete success in his aspirations, he was baffled and discomfitted by the over-powering force of Evil in the world which retarted man's progress. Browning, as a philosophic poet, dealt with the problem of Evil vis-a-vis human life in which he was intensely interested. Browning was never disheartened by the presence and power of evil, but considered it necessary for the progress of man in his life. Evil checked man from attaining perfection and kept him imperfect. It was better that man struggled to achieve perfection but could not attain it, for perfection is stagnation and 'what's come to perfection perishes'. Hence Evil provided the necessary blancing force in life and saved man from reaching perfection. Evil was no doubt man's foe, but it was a foe without whose presence progress could not have been possible. Evil, was therefore, a condition of man's moral life, and his moral progress Evil was as permanent as Good and it was man's duty to fight and struggle against the forces of evil believing like *Abt Vogler* that :

There shall never be one last good,
What was will live as before
The evil is null, is nought, is silence implying sound,
What was good shall be good, with evil so much good more.

The presence of evil should not check man from aspiring for higher ideals. Man's ideals should always be higher than his grasp. He should march steadily onwards unmindful of evil keeping his eye on his unattainable ideals. In *Andera Del Sarto* Browning emphasised the necessity of keeping high ideals in one's life :

A man's reach must be above his grasp,
Else, what's an heaven for ?

Man must struggle and strive to come as close to the attainment of his ideals as possible. Man was sent for struggle and fight against heavy odds of life rather than for weak-kneed surrender before the majesty of difficulties. The poet inspired his readers to fight and struggle rather than submit and yield :

Strive and thrive, cry speed, fight on for ever

was Browning's message. In *Rabbi Ben Ezra* he gave the advice :

Youth should strive through acts uncouth
Towards making.

Further in the same poem he gave the exhortation :

Then, welcome each rebuff
That turns earth's smoothness rough,
Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but go!
Be our joys three parts pain.
Strive, and hold cheap the strain
Learn nor account the pang, dare, never grudge throe.

Browning admonished the readers of his poetry to be warriors and fighters, strong and indomitable strugglers, never allowing thoughts of cowardice and cravenness to distract them from their chosen path of heroism and bravery. In the poem *The Statue and the Bust* he condemned cowardice and reproached the two lovers for their lack of courage and enthusiasm in their love.

At this stage one would like to put the relevant question concerning the utility of a life of struggle, when, in-spite of man's best efforts, one was likely to fail and suffer miseries in life like the heroes of Hardy's novels. Browning had a satisfactory answer to give to those who were scared of failures in their struggle. First, a man was not judged by God by his actual attainments and successful records. Man was judged by God by his aspirations, his noble ideals, and his efforts to achieve success in his life. In God's view success was not the yard tick to judge a man's earthly life. A man who had failed in a noble struggle was likely to be placed on a higher pedastal in the kingdom of God as compared to the little man who aspired to gain little and succeeded in achieving that little in his life. This faith of the poet was voiced fervently in *Rabbi Ben Ezra* :

Not on the vulgar mass
Called 'work' must sentence pass
Things done, that took the eye and had the price
But all the world's coarse thumb
And finger failed to plumb
So passed in making up the main account,
All instincts immature
All purposes unsure
That weighed not as his work, *yet swelled the men's account.*

Secondly, failure on the earth was not in any way an object of dismay, for what we fail to achieve in the world, we might succeed in heaven after the end of our journey on the earth :

And what is our failure here but a triumph's evidence
For the fulness of the day ?

Browning believed that on earth we have the *'broken arc'*, ut in heaven there is *'the perfect round'*. Failure need not

dishearten us. The Lover in *The Last Ride Together* gives a spirited defence of failure in life :

> *Fail I alone in words and deeds ?*
> *Why, all men strive and who succeeds ?*
> *Look at the end of work contrast*
> *The petty done, the undone vast.*

Life is a probation. Life follows life. Man's soul is immortal. Death need not terrify us. What man has failed to achieve in this world would be attained by him in the next.

That was Browning's faith and hope in *The Grammarian's Funeral* where he stated :

> *Leave Now to dogs and apes, Man has for ever.*

Such is the optimistic philosophy of Browning. His optimism as G.K. Chesterton has said, "was not founded on any arguments for optimism, nor on opinions, but on life which was the work of God' "Unlike some spiritual voyagers in our literature, he never hugged the shore, but sailed for the open, loving the salt sting of the buffeting waves. A courageous soul, and a vigorous and vital comrade for those saffering from spiritual anaemia."

Q. 37. "Browning inspite of his unquenchable appentency for drama did better work in his dramatic monologue than in his plays." (Herford)—Discuss.

Or

Discuss Browning as a writer of Dramatic Monologue.

Ans. Browning was a dramatic poet and during his life time he produced a number of plays which could not be successfully acted on the stage for in them the thought element was more prominent than action. Browning's plays are closet plays and can best be enjoyed in the drawing-room. The element of action is wanting in his plays and that is the reason why they could not be successful on the stage. Another reason why Browning could not succeed on the stage was that he let loose the flood of introspection, reminiscence and analysis in his plays. His characters indulged in psychological analysis of their motives with the result that action was submerged in the pale cast of thought and nothing seemed important unless it was transmuted into a philosophical form influencing mind and character.

Thuogh Browning could not succed in presenting actable plays on the stage, yet it cannot be denied that he had gifts of a dramatist in a marked degree. The dramatic skill of the poet was

well represented in the dramatic monologue of which he became the supreme master. The dramatic monologue is an instrument for presenting the incidents in the development of the soul. It was the fitting instrument for the expression of the inner thoughts and motives of his characters. Browning's end was the revelation of character, of thoughts, motives and the spirit life of man and he thought that this could best be presented directly in the dramatic poem by catching and representing the character in a sort of confessional monologue indulged at some high critical moment of life. Browning gave to the dramatic monologue a new life force which it had not attained in the hands of Tennyson. He made it specially his own and no one else has ever put such rich and varied material into it. In these monologues Browning had the chance as Mrs. Browning hinted in Aurora Leigh :

> *To outgrow*
> *The simulation of the pointed scene*
> *Boards, actors, prompters, gaslight and costume,*
> *And take for a noble stage the soul itself,*
> *In shifting actions and celestial lights*
> *With all its grand orchestral silences*
> *To keep the pauses of the rhythmic sounds.*

Having presented Browning's preference for the dramatic monologue, let us examine some of its salient characteristics. A dramatic monologue is a kind of comprehensive soliloquy in which the speaker gives expression to his thoughts in the presence of a second person with the object of convincing him of beliefs and convictions. The difference between a soliloquy and a monologue is that whereas in a soliloquy the speaker delivers his own thought without being interrupted and disturbed by any other person, in the dramatic monologue there is always the presence of a second person to whom the thoughts of the speaker are presented, though the second person may not interrupt the mian speaker. "Some of the dramatic monologues are in the from of soliloquy", says Allen Brockington, "but the majority are conversational, i.e., there are listeners and the presence of the listeners affects the talk. Often, the remarks of the listeners are indirectly introduced or indicated by the speakers' answers." In *My Last Duchess* the listener is the messenger who has come to the Duke from another state to negotiate about the second marriage. The Duke's talk is carefully calculated to impress the messenger. In *Bishop Blougram's Apology* the listener is a journalist named, Gigadibs, and the apology is an answer to him for his objections against the Bishop's conduct. In *Fra Lippo Lippi*, the listeners are the members of the watch who brought about Lippo's arrest while he was engaged in a nocturnal adventure.

The earlier glimpses of the dramatic monologue are to be found in *Pauline*. Here the from is *hinted*. It is *disguised* in *Paracelsus* and *developed* in a still disguised form in *Sordollo*. The

real beginning of this form was made in the *Dramatic Lyrics* and *Dramatic Romances and Lyrics*. Some of the outstanding dramatic monologues of Browning are *My Last Duchess*, *Andrea Del Sarto*, *Fra Lippo Lippi*, *Pictor Ignotus* and *The Last Ride Together*.

"Browning's dramatic monologues are not written in order to build up an atmosphere of languid sorrow or quiet determination or havy beauty (like the monologues of Tennyson), but to project with an almost quizzical violence a certain kind of personality, a certain temperament, a way of looking at life, even a moment of history realized in the self-revelation of a type. The method is not impressionistic or symbolic, nor is it really exploratory (T.S. Eliot's monologues, are all three) ; these are set pieces in which a fully known character, seen in a clear light, is set sharply before the reader."

In his dramatic monologues Browning portrays a wide variety of characters drawn from all classes of life, ranging from crooks, cowards, scholars to musicians, painters, Dukes, murderers, cheats, etc. The souls of these characters are brought out in their fullness in these monologues. "With keen, tireless curiosity, he brings the most varied personages to make their confessions to us, some drawn from history, others imaginary, some good, some bad—all unravelling, things to clear-sighted poet, the tangled skein of their emotions and actions. Browning appears to give them wide scope and let them say what they like but in fact he guides their confidence in the direction of his own philosophy of optimism and freedom, and towards that faith in life, in the spiritual essence and immortality of the soul, which is the basis of his generous optimism."

These characters of Browning reveal themselves in their monologues and bring out the inner workings of their minds. Cazamian calls these monologues, "studies in practical psychology", for they reveal a wide variety of characters and provide a peep into their inner life.

The real poetic interest of Browning's monologues lies in the violence and vividness with which he renders the impression of a personality caught unaware. Browning aims continually at the effect of impromptu. In many of the monologues there is a mingling of the colloquial and the unusual one. The unusual produces an effect of grotesqueness that adds life and humour to the monologue.

The characters in these monologues believe in God and justify their deeds and actions by attributing them to God's will. *Sludge the Medium* is certain that his life of lies and conjuring tricks has been conducted in a deep and subtle obedience to God's commands. Bishop Blougram is certain that his life of compromise has been justified by God's will. Andrea Del Satro says to his wife :

At the end
God, I conclude, compensates punishes ;
All is as God over-rules.

Browning's dramatic monologues are mixtures of half-truths and falsehoods. The characters do not reveal the full truths of their life in their speeches. They half reveal and half conceal truths and falsehoods. The characters do not reveal the full truths the soul within and present their thoughts in a tricksy and subtle style.

In the opinion of some critics the dramatic monologues are satires upon their characters because Browning brings out their follies in their speeches. But this is not a just criticism. "The great sophistical monologues which Browning wrote in his later years," says G. K. Chesterton, "are not satires upon their subjects. They are not even harsh or unfeeling exposures of them. They are defences. They say or are intended to say the best that can be said for the persons with whom they deal," *The Last Ride Together* seeks to defend to lover and his follower and *Andrea Del Sarto* provides a defence of the character of the painter.

It is pointed out that Browning's language in his monologues is coarse and brutal. This is only a partial truth for there are many beautiful passages scattered in the monologues.

Browning's philosophy of life is nicely brought out in these monologues. They are also highly suggestive in character and provide enough scope for speculative thinking. To sum up, "These collections of monologues form together one of the most precious and profoundly original contributions to the poetic literature of the nineteenth century. The defects which prevented his complete success in she regular drama are not apparent in this cognate form. He takes just what interests him, and consequently he is nearly always inspired, nearly always at his best."

Q. 38. Write a note on the obscurity and formlessness of Browning's poetry.

Ans. Browning is a difficult poet to understand and the difficulty is intensified by the fact that his poetry is packed with thoughts and is presented in a style that defies analysis and understanding. Browning's poetry appeared obscure, formless and bewildering to the readers of his time and the charge of obscurity is still levelled against the major work of the poet. The publication of *Sordello* created an impression that Browning was an

obscure poet ; for very few literary men could understand the skein of tengled thought presented in this long poem. The reading public found in this poem a monument of obscurity and diffuseness. Tennyson railed against the obscurity of the poem by making a statement that he only understood two lines of it, the opening line "Who will may hear Sordello's story told," and the final, "Who has heard Sordello's story told." Douglas Jarrod, who had taken *Sordello* just to beguile his time after recovery from a prolonged illness soon put down the book in disgust and horrow with the remark, "My God ! I'm an idiot. My health is restored, but my mind's gone. I can't understand two consecutive lines of an English poem." All these reactions to *Sordello* clearly indicate that in this work Browning was unintelligible to the majority of his readers. This characteristic of unintelligibility continued to be a feuture of his later works as well and by the time the poet wrote *The Ring and the Book*, he became so difficult a poet as many readers left the study of his works in sheer despair.

It is a fact that Browning's poems are obscure and formless. They cannot be easily comprehended if proper attention and care is not given to understand them. Browning himself sometimes could not explain the meaning of some of his own poems after they had been composed by him. Once a student went to the poet to seek illumination on a certain point presented by him in one of his poems. Browning read the poem but could not clear the difficulty presented by the student. Quite jocularly Browning replied to the young boy, "When I wrote this poem, two persons knew the meaning of it. God and I, now only one of them (God) knows it."

Let us now analyse and examine the causes responsible for the alleged obscurity found in Browning's poems. Some readers attribute Browning's obscurity to his intellectual vanity. This charge has been ably refuted by G. K. Chesterton who states that there is not an iota of evidence that he was intellectually vain. He was meek and humble, and thought that his ideas were common-place and could be easily understood by his readers. He thought that "whole street was humming with his ideas and that the postman and the tailor are poets like himself." To Browning his ideas were clear and he thought that his readers would be able to follow them. "He was not unintelligible because he was proud," says G. K. Chesterton, "but unintelligible because he was humble. He was unintelligible because his thoughts were vague but because to him they were obvious." The most obvious reason that can be pointed out for Browning's obscurity was the inability of his readers to penetrate through the subtle, deep and philosophical thoughts of the poet. They were fed on the limpid and easy-flowing poetry of Tennyson. To them Browning appeared obscure because there was a plethora of allusions and references in his writings which could not be easily understood by them. The presence of too many allusions

and references in Browning's poetry created confusion in the minds of the readers and they failed to understand him in his true spirit.

Browning wrote too much and revised too little. The time which he should have given to making one thought clear was used in expressing other thoughts that fleeted through his head like a flock of swallows His thoughts rushed more speedily through his mind than his language could possibly express them. His thoughts are so subtle that language could not give them an adequate expression. He had fancies "that broke through language and escaped", and could not be caught by the readers.

Browning had the peculiar habit of presenting too much in too little a space. This condensation of thought was extremely baffling to his readers and defied proper analysis and understanding. The average reader could not keep pace with the subtlety of his thoughts.

Added to this bane of condensation and quick thought, was the faulty grammer of the per. He never bothered about grammer. He followed the policy of suppressing words with the result that many of his lines are elliptical to a fault. He frequently clipped his speech, giving us a series of ejaculations.

F. L. Lucas in *The Victorian Poets* finds fault with Browning's language. He says, "He is indeed one of those writers who treat language not as a musical instrument, needing delicacy no less than power in its handling, but rather as an iron bar which they are to twist and tangle in an exhibition of their prowess as professional strong men."

Browning's style too poses certain difficulties. "He has something to say, something of infinite moment and solemn import but he is comparatively careless how he says it. He is the Carlyle of poetry, the message is everything, the berbal vesture nothing."

Browning need not terrify us if we approach him in the spirit of humility and devote ourselves to his study. Behind the so-called obscurity there is richness of thought and the reader will be amply repaid if he devotes his time studiously to the study of Browning's philosophical thoughts.

Browning's language is a fitting instrument for his philosophical thoughts. His deep and profound thoughts could not have been fittingly expressed in the language of a love song. The priceless gems lie hidden behind the language that baffles the modern readers. But it cannot be denied that the language in which they have been couched is the proper and befitting vesture for them. After all as Berdoe says, "Precious stones do sometimes want digging for. Diamonds and nuggets are not always to be stumbled across on the footpath. Pickaxes and crushing mills are not un-

known in mining operations; and the treasures of kings are kept in strong boxes. The bee cannot gather his honey from the simplest flower without contributing his quota to the process of fertilisation; and the stimulation of our thinking faculties is no small part of the good which great teachers have to do for us. The quarts will pay for crushing, the diamond for digging."

Q. 39. "Browning, while a romantic in temper, was, in comparison with his predecessors, a thorough realist in method." (Herford.)

Or

Write an essay on Browning's Realism.

Or

"Fairy-poetry was impossible in the days of steam." Discuss

Ans. Robert Browning began his poetic career under the inspiring example of Shelley, the sun treader and the glorious Romantic poet of the early nineteenth century. In *Pauline* the influence of Shelley, the Romantic poet, is clearly perceptible. But with the passage of time Browning came out of the tutelage of the pure romantic proclivities of Keats and Shelley, and started taking keen interest in men and women surrounding him on all sides, in beautiful and rugged aspects of Nature, and in everything that was in tune or discord with warm palpitating life. Though temperamentallly a romantic he was a realist in methodology. Browning had certain idealistic visions like the romanticist, but those visions were given a practical life as time moved on. His preoccupation with the realities of life became increasingly more engrossing, and when some one suggested to the poet to weave a world of dreamy fancy, he at once flung in his face the words of his life—'Fairy-poetry is impossible in the days of steam.' "Browning", to quote Herford, "found his poetry pre-eminently among the pursuits, the passions, the interests and problems of civilized men." His is "the world of prose illuminated through and through in every cranny and crevice by the keenest and most exploring of intellects." His words of prose are employed for rendering the sense of real life. He had in his service "a vast heterogeneous army of words gathered like a sudden levy, with a sole eye to their effective force, from every corner of civilized life, wearing the motley of the most prosaic occupation." These words of prose used dexterously by the poet in poetry gave the impression of reality. Soft words with vowel sounds were employed by Tennyson; but Browning used quite hard and rugged words to capture the sense of reality that he was seeking to capture in his realistic poetry.

The realism of Browning has been approached in two different ways and from two different angles by two eminent critics of Browning. Walter Bagehot and G. K. Chesterton have directed our attention to the realism of Browning by referring to his *grotesque art* in poetry. In their opinion Browning is a realist because he deals with 'grotesque art' as found is *Caliban upon Setebos* and on *Holy Cross Day*. By considering Browning as a realist, Bagehot really referred to the disagreeable side of his realism. What Bagehot seems to mean is that Browning is a realist because "he chooses unpleasant subjects and dwells upon the unpleasant aspects of subjects. Caliban is an unpleasant creature, who has nasty thoughts. Browning dwelt unduly upon the nastiness of his thoughts, having begun by making him a more unpleasant creature than Shakespeare's Caliban." Further it is pointed out that in the poem *On Holy Cross Day* Browning becomes a realist because he employs the very words of discordance which the Jews employed while they were going to the Christian Church :

Fee, Faw, Fum .n bubble and squeak !
Blessedest Thursday's the fat of the week
Rumble and tumble, sleek and rough.
Stinking and savoury, smug and gruff.
Take the Church road, for the bell's due chime
Gives us the summons 'tis sermon-tifnes !

The words of the Jews are thoroughly realistic and outraged the sense of the Christians who were accustomed to soft and gentle rhymes.

In the above two instances Browning has been considered a realist because of his pre-occupation with unpleasant and grotesque words expressing an unpleasant and grostesque situation. This is the first view about Browning's realism. But this view does not give us the whole truth about Browning's realism. There is a wider compass that ought to be included in the *Realism* and it is to this wider view that H. V. Routh directs our attention. Browning's realism aims at *honesty* of statement, i.e. representing reality as it is viewed by the poet without melodramatizing it. This, in fact, is the right view, for realism should not be confined to the presentation of grotesque in art, but to the faithful picturing of things seen by the eye and heard from the ear. Realism is the "representation of what is real in fact, the effort to exhibit the literal reality and unvarnished truth of things treating of characters, objects, scenes, events, circumstances, etc., accrding to actual truth or appearance or to intrinsic probability, without selection or preference over the ugly of what is beautiful or admirable, opposed to idealism and romanticism." In other words, realism means "the observation of things as they are, the familiarity with their aspect, physical and intellectual, and the consequent faculty of reproducing them with approximate fidelity.

Browning's art is realistic in the wider and broader use of the term. He tells us exactly what he sees and hears. In *Holy Cross Day* he reproduces the exact words of the Jews for his representation of truth. He tells us what the girls on the steps of Dumo really uttered. He brings to our vision the actual sights and scenes. In *Pied Pier of Homelin* he brings the world of rats and their menace in the city. In *Death in a Desert* he makes us see John, the apostle and his actual death in the desert. In *Porphyria's Lover* he presented the way in which the lover strangled his beloved to death. He gives us the real picture of men in the Chapel in *Christmas Eve*.

In human life Browning represented all types of people that came to his view. He treated the lapses without shrinking or shrinking. He dared to look squarely on the darkest and meanest form of action and passion in his human-beings. He realistically laid bare what was sordid, selfish, impure, corrupt, brutish in the life of man. Thus, Browning in his poetry of human life had his unerring eye both on the good and evil aspects, and both were represented quite faithfully by him.

In love poems Browning presented his men and women in actual love without casting a halo of romance about them. He discarded the troubador's devotional approach to his ladies in the style of the heroes of love in the Middle Ages. He realistically portrayed successful as well as unsuscessful cases of love *In a Gondola* and *Love Among the Ruins* as realistic as *By the Fire Side*. The dress of his ladies is realistically drawn. In *A Lover's Quarrel*, we have the real dress of a modern girl :

See, how she looks now, dressed,
In a sledging cap and vest,
'Tis a huge fur cloak,
Like a reindeer's yoke,
Falls the apest along the breast
Sleeves for her harm to rest,
Or to hang as my love likes best.

Browning's portrayal of Nature was realistic He applied the same method of curiosity to all natural appearances as he applied to human nature. Tennyson deliberately avoided the rough, abrupt and even violent things in nature. He used only smooth, musical and elegant aspects of nature. His treatment of Nature was not done from a realistic point of view. Browning, on the other hand, was realistic in his portraiture of Nature representing her rugged, harsh, stormy as well as beautiful aspects. Here is the method of Browning in presenting Nature and it is the realist's method :

Well, now, look at our villa.
Stuck like the horn of a bull !

Just on a mountain-edge as bare as the creature skull.
Save a mere shag of a bush with hardly a leaf to pull!

The natural feature in *By the Fire-Side*, are intensely and realistically described.

On our other side is the straight up rock ; and a path is twixt the gorge and it by boulder-stones where lichens mock :

The marks on a moth, and small ferns fit,
Their teeth to the polished black.

Browning's method in the portrayal both of men and nature is intensely realistic and many twentieth century poets like Kipling. Masefield, Davies have been inspired by Browning's art in their realistic portraiture of nature and human life.

Q. 40. "Browning was the poet who would be a dramatist, but could not be." Discuss.

Or

Write a note on Browning as a dramatic poet.

Ans. Browning's introduction to the world of drama came through a request of Charles Macready, the actor, that Browning should write something for him and thus stopped him from going to America. *Strafford* was the answer to this request, a play which Macready dutifully produced in 1837, but which soon had to be put aside. Once the play was written Macready began to have doubts as to its suitability for stage performance. He wrote in his diary on 19th March 1837: "Read *Strafford* in the evening, which I fear is too historical:it is the policy of the man and its consequence upon him, not be heart, temper, feelings, that work on the policy." His apprehension came true as the play proved an utter failure on the stage and the same fate awaited the other plays of Browning. *Strafford* failed as a drama because the dialogue was too rhetorical, and the characters, although well-delineated, did not seem to move. Browning had the skill in the portrayal of character and in conceiving powerful dramatic situations, but the poet could not focuss his attention on the behavious of his characters and so revealing their nature.

Browning's main aim in *Strafford* was the delineation of a man of undoubted and unshakable nobility,torn between two ideas-love for his country and love for his king. In order that this object should be successfully achieved it was necessary not only that we should see the symptoms of the dilemma in Strafford himself, but that both alternations should be put before us in such a way as to

make us understand why he should feel any dilemma at all. The blank verse in which the play is written does not help towards this end The bareness and the simplicity of the verse indicates the extent to which Browning was trying to adopt his art to the purpose in hand, but it is too stilted to achieve any impression of real dialogue. Nor it is helpful to the reader of the play that Browning assumes a thorough familiarity with the events on which its action is based. Browning has also failed to make the motivation of the central character real to his audience.

Browning's next play *King Victor and King Charles* is divided into four parts, each part manifesting a particular aspect of the character of either Victor or Charles. The play is based on the tension between King Victor of Sardinia and his son, King Charles. The focal point is again the scul of the hero. We are primarily in terested in the development of the soul of King Charles from apparent weakness to strength and determination.

A Blot on the Scutcheon was written in 1840, and was published in February 1843. The action of the play takes place in Nineteenth-Century England. It is a love story of Mildred and Henry. Mildred is visited by her love. Her brother accuses his sister and she confesses her guilt by silence, but she will not tell the name of her seducer. Later on Henry is killed by her brother and she also dies of excess of grief with her arms round his neck. The play is intensely moving.

Browning's next play *Colmbe's Birthday* was published in April 1844. His next play *Luria* was published in 1846. "The plot of the play is the simplest of all those Browning had written upto this time. Luria, the hero, is a Moor employed by Florence as leader of her armed forces in the war against Pisa. True Florentine policy, always treacherous, had dictated that before Luria had gained the victory which his ability as a commander had made inevitable, movements should have been made to prevent his becoming too powerful and thus threatening the security of the state. The play shows the naive and trusting Luria whose character is modelled on that of Othello, at the point of victory. He is surrounded by spies. Branccio, the Secretary of State, has been taking evidence from the Florentine soldier displaced by Luria, and from Luria's own statements and actions, in order to feed the secret trial which is going on in Florence. Domizia, a Florentine lady whose family had been accused of treason and destroyed by the state, hopes to use Luria in order to effect her revenge. The state is aware of this and has placed her by him in order to provide itself with an excuse to act. The only faithful servant Luria has at the beginning of the play is his fellow Moor, Husain. Yet the course of the action sees all those around him forced to recognize nobility and perfect integrity in him. At the end of the play Luria takes position and dies surrounded by those who have been forced to

but it is not given out spasmodically in action. In a play which is to be seen, and where the *doing* has affected us not the *thinking*, it is a serious drawback." (Compton-Rickett). Hugh Walker refers to the same lack of action in Browning's plays when he says—"Another reason for Browning's limited success in the drama is the fact that though he is profoundly interested in character, he cares little for action as such, and yet the drama is essentially the literature of action."

"Drama demands sustained plot, as was proved at an earliest date by the failure of the Senecan plays. Browning's stress lay on the development of souls; but he values souls not for what they are but for what they would, whereas the dramatist's business is to show character in action." (Grierson and Smith).

Drama does not admit of argumentation and discussion. It is not polemical thing. Argumentation and discussion arrest the course of action. Browning's defect lay in the fact that he allowed his characters to indulge in discussion and argumentation. This is the main reason why Browning failed as a dr matist and Shakespeare succeeded in achieving success in his plays. "The significant difference lies in the enormous amount of argumentation in Browning's plays and the complete absence of it from Shakespeare." For example in *As You Like It*, the characters live and act or live and dream according to their liking in the 'golden world' of their fancy. They don't discuss and argue. But in Browning's *Colombe's Birthday*, there is the preponderance of reason and argument. "Facts are established after they have been hammered out by reasoning and discussion. The same defect mars *Luria*. In the both plays the argument is rhetorical, but still it is something different from the Shakespearean method of unfolding a character as a flower unfolds its petals."

The age in which Browning lived was partly responsible for his failure as a dramatist. It was an age of poetry, prose and novel rather than that of drama. The lyric element was more in force than the dramatic. The predominance of the lyric implies a development of feeling and reflection, rather than action. 'The native hue of resolution is sickled over by the pale cast of thought', and the preponderance of thought drowns action. Much is said and little is done. Browning in spite of his dramatic bent of mind could not be free from the lyric hold and wrote quite fascinating lyrics.

As a dramatist Browning was not a success and the reason as suggested by Selincourt is that "Browning's stage characters have a way of talking at you, or at each other in a perpetual tension of moral crisis very fatiguing for the reader, and still were fatiguing for the spectator."

acknowledge the superiority of his nature. His last action epitomizes the nobility of his whole life."

Browning's skill as a dramatist lies in the protrayal of character. His character do not express themselves in action, but are engaged in introspection and analysis of their feelings. Shakespeare works with the caly of human action! Browning with the caly of human thought. Browning's dramatic genius is best unfolded in psycho-analysis of the characters. He method is that of evolving character and dramatic situations by arguments. Some of the characters of his play are intensely dramatic and froceful. Ottima and sebald in *Pippa Passes*, Colombe and Valdence in *Colombe's Birthday*, the Moor Luria in the play which bears his name, the surly patriot Chiappino and the papal legate Ognibun in *A Soul's Tragedy* have been drawn wtih rare skill and dramatic insight into character. Browning's real interest in the portrayal of character.

Browning's dramatic skill was well exhibited in the unfolding of strong dramatic situations. he situation in *Prophyria's Lover* is intensely dramatic Nowhere out of Shakespeare, and rarelly even in Shakespeare. can there be found a scene more intensely dramatic than the tremendous incident of Ottima Sebald in *Pippa Passes*. The murder of Duncan is not mroe terrific or more vivid. *Colombe's Birthday* is a thrilling dramatic romance of perennial charm and it is almost completely free, at least as regards its general meaning and conception and is equally clear and of a *Bolt in the Scutcheon* Dickens emphatically declared that no man living and no man dead could produce such a work.

In spite of Prowning's command of character and dramatic situation, he could not be a successful dramatist on the stage. What after all was the reason for all that ? There are many reasons which account for the failure of Browning as a dramatist.

In the plays of Browning the dramatic motive comes from without, rather than from within. In *Pippa Passes* the dramatic motive is dependent on the song of Pippa passing outside. Nothing springs from within. In *Macbeth*—everything the promptings of the witches, the birth of the idea of murder in the mind of Macbeth, the abetting of Macbeth—is from within.

Browning fails to make his situations intensely theatrical. Browning's own personality intrudes in the utterance of the characters and takes away their theatrical force. "They have the sacred rage and fire, but the flame is that of Browning, and not of the separate creation he strives to inform."

There is a lack of action in Browning's plays. Drama is action. Drama may be defined as "an articulate story presented in action." "In Browning we have the story, it is articulate also,

But his genius essentially dramatic. The fact cannot be denied. In what direction was Browning's dramatic genius channelised ? It was reflected in the interpretation of life and in a comprehensive representation of the stand point of his characters. Browning's dramatic genius was unfolded in providing opportunities to his characters to lay bare their souls and disburden their heavy weight that might be lying on their hearts. His dramatic monologues pour-forth the souls of his characters in a characteristically dramatic manner. He presents the views, feelings and opinions of his characters with great lucidity and vividness. His characters may sometimes be projections of himself, but that does not make a difference in dramatic value of his work and the greatness of his dramatic genius. Mrs. Orr says in this connection : "Even if it were otherwise, if his men and women were all variations of himself, as imagined under differences of sex, of age, of training, or of condition, he would still be dramatic in this essential quality." Browning's claim to be a dramatic genius essentially lies in his presentation of his characters, their view points, their short-comings, their merits, and it is on this revelation of the souls of his characters that he will be recognised as a dramatic poet in the Victorian Age.

8

Matthew Arnold

Q. 41. Examine Matthew Arnold's poetry as a criticism of life.

Ans Matthew Arnold believed that poetry is "a criticism of life under the condition fixed for such criticism by the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty." His poetry holds true to this ideal. The prevailing mood of Arnold in all his poems is reflective and critical, and his poetry is "a series of variations on the many sided contemporary conflict between spontaneity and discipline, emotion and reason, faith and scepticism, the rich youth and the dry age of individual and the race.' As he believed that what Europe in his generation principally needed was criticism he gave this criticism in verse as well as in prose. His poetry provides a rich criticism of the poets, the people, and the conditions of his times. In all his deepest poems, in *Thyrsis* and in *The Scholar Gipsy*, in *Resignation*, in *Obermann* poems, in *A Southern Night*, we hear the poet passing judgment on the life of his age, the life of his country, the lives of individual men." Goethe, Byron, Wordsworth, Shelley are all examined with keen insight and penetrating vision. In the *Memorial Verses* Arnold speaks of Goethe, as "the physician of the Iron age." Byron is hailed as "the thunder's roll," and as "the found of fiery life." Wordsworth's 'healing power' is eulogised. In *The Youth of Nature* Wordsworth is praised 'as a priest to us all of the wonder and bloom of the world.' In *Stanzas from Grande Chartreuse*, Shelley is represented as a poet of pain and distress, and how, 'the breeze carried thy lovely wail away, musical through Italian trees that fringe thy soft blue Spezzian bay.' In *Obermann Once More*, rich tribute is paid to Senancour, the master of Arnold's wandering youth.

Arnold's poetry critically presents the growing craze of the age for material pelf and power, for riches and wealth. Arnold's best poetry is conceived "as a battle with worldliness, the worldliness in ourselves, and the worldliness in the world." The growing conflict between science and religion, doubt and faith is revealed in *The Scholar Gipsy* :

Thou waitest for the spark from Heaven ! and we
Light nalf-believers of our casual creeds,
Who never deeply felt, nor clearly will'd.

The same poem criticises the growing restlessness, and worldliness among the people of the age :

Before this strange disease of modern iife,
With its sick hurry, its divided aims,
Its heads o'ertax'd its palsied, hearts, was rife—

The lust for wealth and disdain for truth prevalent in the age is presented in the 21st stanza of *Thyrsis* :

A fugitive and gracious light he seeks,
Shy to illumine ; and I seek it too
....
'Tis not in the world's market bough and sold.

The Scholar Gipsy is advised to run away from the hectic life of the worldly minded people of his age :

But fly our paths, our feverish contact fly !
For strong the infection of our mental strife,
Which, though it gives no bliss, yet spoils for rest ;

"The Scholar Gipsy" says Trilling, "is a passionate indictment of the new dictatorship of the never resting intellect over the soul of modern man. It is a threnody for the lives of men switched by modernity, of men who have become in the words of Empedocles, living men no more, nothing but "naked, eternally restless mind."

Being tired of the ugliness, worldliness and the sick hurry and divided aims, the poet seeks to retire to a monastery where he may find peace. In the *Stanzas from Grande Chartreuse*, the poet feels attracted by the peace of the monastery :

Oh, hide me in your gloom profound
Ye solemn seats of holy pain !
Take me, cowl'd forms, and fence me round
Till I possess my soul again ;

He is dis-satisfied with the growth of Science. Science has conceived a soulless universe and has been the mother of doubt, distraction and scepticism :

Most men in a brazen prison live
Their lives to some unmeaning task-work give
Dreaming of nought beyond their prison wall.

Democracy leaves him cold. He is critical of the growing tide of democracy and the power coming to the masses. The degrading and baneful effect of democracy is painfully presented in *Empedocles* :

Great qualities are trodden down
And littleness united
Is becoming invincible.

In the domain of trade and industry, Arnold again finds the same sad tale, for they have brought in wealth, but allowed happiness and health to pass off, and hence seeks the remedy for "this strange disease of modern life" in the happy past, "when wits were fresh and clear, and life ran gaily as the sparkling Thames." Just as the Thames symbolizes the - untroubled life of the past, London "with its ungainly spread and sprawl, its lack of organisation, political or architectural, its undirected expansion, its noise, 'its mud salad' streets, its terrible contrasts of wealth and poverty," epitomises the ugly life of Victorian England. Between the two worlds—one dead, the other powerless to be born —Arnold finds a wasteland of Nature, which is undivine, blind, dying, phantom empty, no longer capable of givine laws or direction. This land is full of man's senseless uproar which drowns his pain and confusion.. Arnold feels than in such a world, which is without God, fundamentally is separated from Nature, there is nothing to blind him to life, and strangely enough, little even to bind him to his fellowmen."

In short, "Blind strivings, wounded feet, confused alarms, ignorant armies clashing by night, howling senses ebb and flow, fatigue and fever, vexed hearts, sick hurry and divided aims, casual creeds, the city's jar, blind uncertainty, unspeakable desires; nameless feelings are criticised, judged, condemned." Arnold's letter to his mother in 1869 is the best commentary on what he sought to do in poetry by way of criticism and judgment—"My poems represent, on the whole, the main movement of mind of the last quarter of a century."

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Q. 42. "Nothing in Arnold's verse is more arresting than its elegiac element." (Hugh Walker)—Discuss.

Ans. Arnold is the greatest elegiac poet of the Victorian age. "If I had to define Matthew Arnold's place in poetry" says Garrod, "I should be disposed to say of him, quite simply, that he is the greatest elegiac poet in our language not in virtue merely of *Thyrsis* but in virtue of the whole temper of his Muse. His genius was essentially elegiac. His poetry, profoundly melancholy, runs from it, as I think, hurt, hurt in some vital part. It believes itself able to sustain life only in the shade." The elegiac temper of Arnold is the ruling passion of his life and poetry. "Nothing in Arnold's verse" says Hugh Walker, "is more arresting than its elegiac element. It is not too much to say there is no other English poet in whom the elegiac spirit so reigns as it does in him. "He found in the elegy the outlet of his native melancholy of the 'Virgillian cry, over the mournfulness of moral destiny." Other poets like Milton, Gray, Shelley, Tennyson had given expression to

their sorrow in single elegies. but no one else had used the elegiac form so frequently as Arnold.

Not only are Arnold's elegies numerous, but they also constitute his best work in poetry The elegies of Arnold are in the line of Gray rather than that of Milton or Shelley or Tennyson. Even the personal elegies are marked with a note of general grief. *Thyrsis* is an elegy on his friend Clough; *Rugby Chapel* commemorates the death of his father Dr. Arnold, the Headmaster of Rugby: *A Southern Night* is for his brother, and *Westminister Abbey* is written on the death of Dean Stanley. Each one of these elegies is of a personal character, but "even in these instances of keen personal sorrow the poet widens his view and treats of human destiny, almost as much as Gray does in the *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard.*"

Arnold had thus the capacity of writing a formal or traditional elegy and of expressing his elegiac mood in a poem. While *Thyrsis* in the original sense and its companion poem, *The Scholar Gipsy*, in the modern one, are his true elegies the other elegiac pieces are what Elton calls them, *Associative Poetry* wherein "the ethical and which reflective element easily over-powers the elegiac, and which circles round a place, or a person. or both" "Indeed it is the sense of tears in mortal affairs around him or "the heart-break in the heart of things' that promoted Arnold to write these elegiac verses, and he could feel one with Shelley in uttering "Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought."

Poets learn in suffering, whether personal or imaginative, what they teach in song. "Arnold's most consistent achievement," observes Middleton Murry, "was in the kind which we call elegiac." It suited best with his own persistent mood, of restrained grief for the life which he could not accept and the soul which he could not make his own. Moreover, his elegiac poetry was in keeping with a true and living literary tradition." In *Isolation* "the unplum'd. salt, strangling sea". in *Too Late* "the lovers meet, but meet too late", have all elegiac ring. Despite the worldly strain in him, his best poetry stands deliberately aside from the world that it should be; so he conceived it to be a condition of its life. The contrast between the superficial life of every day and the buried self of the soul is dominant in his poetry to the degree of tyranny.

Arnold's melancholy and pessimism sprang from many causes, the chief of them being "the contemplation of man's destiny from the hopeless tangle of his own age. and from the course of the life of mortal men on the earth." Disappointment in love, deaths of friends and relatives, loss of faith in the age and above all the melancholy cast of his mind were further responsible for his pessimistic and melancholy outlook on life. This feeling of misery and melancholy throbs practically in every poem of Arnold, and can be traced to the philosophical, religious and social changes

brought about by the development of science, utilitarian philosophy in his age, that called for a fresh adjustment of values. To the poet the world was a vale of tears, a place to endure and to suffer. In *Dover Beach* the world is represented as dreary as a desert :

Ah, love, let us be true
To one another, for the world, which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams
So various, so beautiful, so new
Hath really neither joy, nor light, nor love
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain,
And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight
Where ignorant armies clash by night :

Man's lot in the universe is one of helplessness, hopelessness and despair. Man is lonely and solitary even in a populous world. Again and again the mind of the poet turns to the loneliness of life:

'es! in the sea of life enisled
With echoing strains between us thrown,
Dotting the shore-less watery wild
Ve mortal millions live alone.

Natu suffers from loneliness.

Alone the sun rises and alone spring the great streams.

Man's helplessness in the world is emphasised in two lines representing 'the quiet stoicism of a melancholy soul':

We cannot kindle when we will
The fire which in the hearts resides.

Our destiny is to spend life.

In beating where we must not pass
'And seeking what we shall not find.

In grief and despair man leads his life, without experiencing the glow or joy of life. In *Scholar Gipsy* the tragedy and pathos of man's lot in the universe is pathetically presented:

For whom each year we see
Breeds new beginnings, disappointments new
Who he sitate and falter life away
And loose somorrow the ground won to day.

In another poem the miserable spectacle of man marching mournfully to the grave is piognantly struck:

With aching hands and bleeding feet
We dig deep, lay stone on stone
We bear the burden and the heat
Of the long day, and wish it were done.

In *Rugby Chapel* we get a peep into the general lot of humanity:

> *Most men eddy about*
> *Here there—eat and drink*
> *Are raised aloft, are hurl'd in the dust,*
> *Striving blindly, achieving nothing*
> *And then they die—perish.*

Man is a puppet in the hand of Destiny or Fate. The overpowering force of fate in human life is represented in *Sohrab and Rustum*, where under the power of fate the father kills his son:

> *We are all like swimmers in the sea,*
> *Poised on the top of a huge wave of fate*
> *Which hangs uncertain to which side to fall,*
> *And whether it will leave us up to land*
> *Or whether it will roll us out to the sea,*
> *Back out to sea, to the waves of death,*
> *We know not.*

The futility of Love and Ambition in human life is represented in *Tristram and Iseult* where the life of Alexander the Great, who died at the age of thirty-two, and his foolishness of conquering empires and extending his kingdom is exposed.

Arnold's Melan holy is not altogether sickening or sad. It has a silver lining in its cloud. "His scepticism is not without sunshine; his sadness not without gladness," He himself realised in 1853, "the year of crystallisation of great intellectual changes in Arnold" that what the complaining millions of men want is something to *elevate* and *ennoble* them—not merely to add zest to their melancholy or grace to their dream." The poet has thrown hints of his cheering message n a number of poems, although, "as he progressed he left poetry behind." "The aids of noble life are within", he maintains in one of his poems. In another poem he says "Task in our hours of insight will'd can be through hours of gloom fulfilled", and signals to a rising, rousing day:

> *Despair not thou as I despair'd,*
> *Nor be cold gloom thy prison:*
> *Forward the gracious hours have fared,*
> *And see! the sun is risen!*

Q. 43. Write an essay on Matthew Arnold's Poetry of Nature.

Ans. "Nature of Arnold", says Stopford A. Brooke "is frequently the nature the modern science has revealed to us, matter in motion, always acting rigidly, according to certain way nature,

which, for want of a wiser term, we call laws. For the first time this view of Nature enters into English poetry with Arnold. He sees the loveliness of her doings, but he also sees her tarrors and dreadfulness and her relentlessness. But what in his poetry he chiefly sees is the peace of Nature's obedience of law, and the everlasting youth of her unchanging life." Though Arnold lived with his father in the Lake District under the very influence of Wordsworth, his references to Nature lack the warmth and richness that marked the romantic treatment of Nature. "This is presumably due," as Beech says, "to his want of enthusiasm for either science or religion, the two main inspires of Nature worship. One feels at once, in reading Arnold, that one has reached a period of distinctly more modern than that of Wordsworth ; that the poet no longer makes these religious assumptions in regard to the universe which were latent in Wordsworth's philosophy of Nature. He is the least transcendental of English poets ; and so no German inspiration had eome in, as with Emerson and Whitman to give a new lease of life to Nature."

Arnold's reactions to Nature are according to his varying moods. In his early sonnet *In Harmony with Nature* he says :

Man must begin, know this where Nature ends,
Nature and man can never be fast friends
Fool, if thou canst not pass her, rest her slave.

Again in his another sonnet, *Religious Isolation* he avers that man must learn to play alone his religious game :

Nature's great law, and law of all men's min s—
To its own impulse every creature stirs;
Live by thy light, and earth will live by hers.

This is the scientific view of Nature in Arnold, according to which Nature is just moving matter, acting on certain laws, and in concept, "neither good nor evil", and thus a neutral force devoid of any morality and indifferent to human sufferings. The closing lines of *Sohrab and Rustum* wherein :

She majestic River floated on
Out of the mist and hum of that low land
Into the frosty star light, and there moved
Rejoicing, through the hush'd Chorasmian waste.

as if no grim human tragedy has occurred by her hank, are a clear illustration of his scientific treatment of nature.

But at other times Arnold maintains the distinction between Nature and man in order to exalt the moral qualities felt in Nature above the restlessness of man. In the following lines the poet reads a moral meaning in Nature and describes Nature not as she actually is but what he imagines a her to be. His treatment of her becomes artistic or poetical as he follows the way of Wordsworth :

Yet Fausta, the mute turf we tread,
The solemn hills around us read,

This stream which falls incessantly
The strange scrawl'd rocks, the lonely sky,
If I might lend their life a voice,
Seems to bear rather than rejoice,
Calm soul of all things : make it mine
To feel amid the city's jar,
That there abides a peace of thine
Man did not make, and cannot mar,
Blow, ye winds; lift me with you;
I come to the wild,
Fold closely, O Nature,
Thine arms around thy child.

Yet in *The Youth of Nature* Arnold's approach to and interpretation of Nature is metaphysical and cosmological. Coleridge's dictum that "we receive but what we give, and in our life alone does Nature live," is challenged by Arnold. According to Arnold, Nature does not depend for its life upon the observation and appreciation of man; it exists independently, with a lift and glory of its own, with qualities and characteristics of its own :

Loveliness, Magic, and Grace,
They are here—they are set in the world
They abide—and the finest of souls
Has not been thrill'd by them all,
Nor the dullest been dead to them quite.
The poet who sings them may die,
But they are immortal, and live,
For they are the life of the world.

"Indeed", says Stopford A. Brooke "Arnold, was not faithful to the scientific view of Nature. His conception of her wavered with his mood. He, sometimes, in a sort of reversion to Wordsworth, speaks of her as a powerful help to him." Arnold turns to her for the moral lessons she teaches. He contrasts her calm with our turmoil, her rest after action with our hurry, our confusion, and our noise :

One lesson, Nature, let me learn of thee
One lesson that in every wind is blown,
One lesson of two duties served in one,
Though the loud world proclaim their enmity
Of Toil unsever'd from Tranquillity
Of labour, that in still advance outgrows
For noisier schemes, accomplished in Repose,
Too great for haste, too high for rivalry,
Yes, while on earth, a thousand discords ring
Man's senseless uproar mingling with his toil,
Still do thy sleepless ministers move on,
Their glorious tasks in silence perfecting !

Still working, blaming still our vain turmcil,
Labourers that shall not fail, when man is gone.

It is, thus, the one great lesson of tranquil toil, of continuous work as duty that are taught by Nature to Arnold, who in turn describes them to men. But she is very often to him an escape, a refuge from the fever and fret, wariness and waste of life, from "the infection of our mental strife." In *Self Dependence* he entreats the Sea and the Stars :

Ye who from my childhood up have calm'd me,
Calm me, ah, compose me to the end.

Arnold is very intimate with Nature and it is this intimacy that makes his descriptions of Nature vivid and true. He invests with poetic fancy the Oxford countryside, the Alpine scenery, the Oxus in *Sohrab and Rustum*, the Thames in *Thyrsis*, and mountains and meadows, all receive the magic of poetry in such lines— "Alpine meadows, soft suffused with rain, where thick the croous blows", and in *Thyrsis*, "Roses that down the alleys shine afar," or "Primroses, orphans of the flower pine. The accuracy of Tennyson has been greatly and fondly praised, but Arnold does not lag him behind in the exactness of observation and at times in the vividness of description. He is accurate not only in respect of flowers, but even of mountains, roads, rivers, and lakes. They are all depicted with precision and exactitude. Here is a lovely picture of the Oxford countryside :

Screen'd in this nook o'er the high, half-reap'd field,
And here till sun-down, Shepherd will be,
Through the thick corn the scarlet poppies peep
And round green roots and yellowing stalks I see
Pale blue convolvulus in tendrils creep ;
And air-swept linders yield
Their scents, and rustle down their perfumed showers
Of bloom on the bent grass where I an laid,
And bowar me from the August sun with shade;
And the eye travels down to Oxford's towers.

Arnold speaks affectionately of birds and flowers, and the swallow, the rook and cuckoo find favour with him. The nightingale receives so much attention that there is one complete poem on her—*Philomela*, "the tawny-throated Wanderer froma Grecian shore", with "eternal passion! eternal pain." As for flowers the blue convolvulus, the scented poppy, the chestnut flowers and the gold-dusted snapdragon, the cowslip and the daffodil, the white and purple fritillaries, the sweet william and blond meadow-sweet, the May flower and the primrose, brighten and perfume Arnold's poetry.

It is generally the quiet and subdued moods, the silences of Nature than her sounds that Arnold's poetry treats of. *Rugby*

Chapel begins with "Coldly, sadly descends the autumn evening" and *Sohrab and Rustum* with "the first grey of morning" that "fill'd the east, and the fog rose out of the Oxus stream," "It is rather 'mist than brightness, moonlight more than sunlight twilight more than daylight" that we meet in Arnold's poetry. In *Self Dependence* the sea performs with joy its long-silvered roll. In *The Scholar Gipsy* there are strips of moon-blanch'd green, while in *Dover Beach* the poet finds "the turbid ebb and flow of human misery." In the ebb that meets the moon-blanch'd sand, and in *Tristram and Iseult* the poet speaks of :

Far beyond the sparkling trees
Of the castle park one sees
The bare heaths clear as day
Moor behind moor. far, far away
Into the heart of Brittany.

The rivers like the Thames, the Nile, the Rhine, the Oxus, the Moorshab, the Tejend, and the Helmud are introduced chiefly to form a back-ground to his poems, but the poet endows them at times with a symbolism. The Oxus in *Sohrab and Rustum*, "a foil'd circutous wanderer," that flows 'through beds of sand its and matted rushy isles,' and has thus many ups and down prior to "lang'd-for dash of waves" for "his luminous home in the star-shot Aral Sea, is symbolic of human destiny in its various stages from the cradle to the crematorium. That is why "Q" justly asks—"Who can think of Arnold's poetry as whole without feeling that Nature is always behind it as a living background ?—Whether it be the storm of wind and rain shaking Tintagel, or the sea-laden water-meadows along Thames, or the pine forests on the bank of English garden in June, or Oxus, its mists and fens and "the hushed Chorasmian waste."

"Arnold had Wordsworth's calm, but neither his cheerfulness, nor his detachment. Wordsworth lives and thinks with the hills for his sole companions, but Arnold never rests in Nature alone. In place of the steady optimism of Wordsworth we have in Arnold the sense that a destiny ; so rarely yielding great results as life of man :

Though bearable, seems hardly worth
This pomp of worlds, this pain of birth.

Arnold's attitude towards Nature is of a great variety. He observes her neutrally, for she "sees man control the wind, the wind sweep man away." For him she possesses a gaiety or cheerfulness but that only intensifies the darkness and despair of man ; he finds her fickle and callous, but possessing tranquil toil and

persistent labour. He adopts both subjective and objective attitude towards Nature, and if he enjoys on the one hand in "the mighty world of eye and ear" and feels Nature's calm "aimed the city's jar", on the other he maintains that she has her own loveliness, magic, and grace far beyond our reach. But Arnold goes directly to Nature so that he may enter her sanctuary :

Thus feeling, gazing, let me grow
Compos'd, refresh'd, ennobled, clear,
Then willing let my spirit o
To work or wait elsewhere or here.

9

W. B. Yeats

Q. 44. Examine the development of Yeats's lyrical powers from his early poetry to the middle and the later phases.

Or

The lyrics of Yeats are devoid of any unifying moral element. Do you agree to this view ? Give reasons for your answer.

Ans. Yeats' father was partial to dramatic poetry for its clarity and fixity of outline as distinguished from vagueness and mistiness of lyrical verse. Yeats entered upon his poetic career by writing poetic plays in the tradition of Shelley and Tennyson. But his genius was essentially lyrical and the plays he wrote bore a lyrical slant. The plays are in the nature of elaborate lyrics and the songs scattered all over them constitute their main charm. Both from the view-pointof quality and quantity of his lyrics, Yeats deserves the status of one of the greatest lyric poets of England. Lyrics came to him as naturally as leaves to a tree.

Yeats' lyrics may broadly be classified under four heads, Viz., (1) Lyrics of escape, (2) political lyrics, (3) lyrics of reminiscence, and (4) love lyrics. The classification is not rigid and watertight, for the different categories constantly mingle and overlap, and there is much that cannot be assigned to any classification. For instance, his political lyrics contain elements of reminiscence and the *Supernatural Songs* are not covered by any of the fourfold classification. Such categorisation has been made only for facilitating study.

During the early part of his career, the poet, for the most part, writes escape-lyrics. The reality is irksome to him and he dreams of a fairy world where life is free from fever, fret and weariness of life's hard and harsh reality. *The Song of the Happy Shepherd, The Stolen Child, The Man Who went to Fairyland, Down by the Sally Gardens*, etc., transports us to a dream-world where the characters dance with fairies and enjoy the delights and pleasures of fairy-world. Yeats' early volume of verses, *The Crossways*. (1889), and *The Rose* (1893), include some of his finest and most extensively anthologised lyrics. *The Lake Isle of Innisfree* wherein the poet expresses his most earnest desire for a Utopia where he would live peacefully in a bee-loud glade is the most popular of Yeats' poems. It was extolled by R.L. Stevenson who

says that it is so quaint and airy, simple, artful and eloquent to the heart. The native charm and the very spirit of folk-lore which make a folk-song go round the world from generation to generation without facing criticism or opposition from any class or quarter, has been captured by Yeats, and it is this spirit which makes for their peculiar charm and appeal. The vague and misty imagery, the Pre-Raphaelite ornamentation, use of poetic vocabulary and soft, haunting and entertaining music enhances the dreamy atmosphere and tend to transport the reader to fairy-land.

However, even in this early period it is not all irresponsible merry singing and the poet is conscious of the reality. He realises that withdrawal from the world and shirking of responsibility may be the "World's bane". This feeling is strikingly expressed in the beautiful lyric. *The Happy Townland.* The poet went on writing escape lyrics, but the later escape lyrics vastly differ from earlier ones, the difference being cleary noticeable in the finest *Byzantium* escape-lyrics of the later period. The earlier lyrics are distinguished for lightness and simplicity, while those of the later period are elaborate, complex, rich in texture and hard in tone. The sentimental, pensive tone of the earlier lyrics is replaced by a tone of suffering and purification through facing the ordeal of life. In the earlier lyrics the poet escapes into an enchanted, Utopian world, whereas in later lyrics he wants to rise through self-knowledge and self-purification to a world of "unaging intellect", lying somewhere beyond Time. The lyrics of the later creation have prose-rhythms, hard words and brilliant images.

The political lyrics of Yeats are among the finest ever written by him. At first glance it would appear that politics being topical in character, are not a suitable subjects for writing lyrics on. But thanks to Yeats' art, topical has been transformed into general and i parted an universal significance. He transmutes his observation into a state of mind, into an intensely felt personal emotion, and finally raises it to an impersonal level. In this way, the topical and the contemporary is transmuted into a fit theme for verse. *Upon a House Shaken by the Land Agitation, September 1813, Easter 1916, Meditations in Times of Civil War,* and *Sixteen Dead Men*, are some of the magnificent lyrics inspired and prompted by political scenes and situation in Ireland. They are the specimen of the maturity of Yeats' poetic art. He can now harmonise the personal with the impersonal, the particular with the general or universal. In these lyrically brought together opposites he effects a remarkable union of simplicity with intricacy of thought and intensity of emotion. They also exhibit Yeats' mythopoetic imagination at its best, For example, we see in *Easter 1916* ;

I have met them at close of Day,
Coming with vivid faces,

From counter or desk among grey
Eighteenth century Houses

An impression is thus created that the characters concerned belong to some remote past and have come of it to fulfil their role in the contemporary politics to help Ireland in her fight for freedom. Different characters stand for different modes of life. The poet creates a mythology from philosophers, statesmen, patriots, mystics, etc. The lyric is intensely personal. It reveals what an overpowering effect the rebellion had on Yeats and reveals it so sincerely, so directly, that its rhythms haunt the memory. The political lyrics are firy, burning with passion, and thus a subject of little poetic charm is made stirring and expressive. They present a picture of the poet's disillusionment with the Irish masses and his great bitterness at their mean selfishness Many of the martyrs among Irish rebles were the poet's friends, and so their sacrifice was a deep personal loss to him. These political lyrics painfully record the emotions of the poet. They are a remarkable combination of complexity and simplicity. They are couched in bare, austere language, but are saturated with thought and emotion.

Apart from the Irish scene, the then state of world affairs also moved the poet, inspiring him to produce lyrics, namely, *The Second Coming* and *Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen.* His keen consciousness of imminent horror, of some on rushing disaster and doom, gives to these lyrics the urgency of a prophecy. In the poem *The Second Coming* in particular, the whole philosophy of history is compressed into a short span so that the lyric is aflame with the fire of prophecy and intensity of horror. It expresses the poet's mystic insight into a frightful future.

The lyrics of reminiscence comprises such stirring compositions as *In Memory of Major Robert Gregory*, *The Municipal Gallery Revisited*, *Among School Children*, "*Introductory Rhymes*" to *Responsibilities*, etc. In his poetry of Reminiscence, the poet draws more and more on family memories and traditions.

We notice the poet once again trying to relate his past with the present through a common tradition which links him with his ancestors. The Pollexfens—Alfred, Willian George—stalk through his verse adding family pride as a unifying emotion. *In Memory of Major Robert Gregory* is the most genuinely commemorative of all the English elegies. In poignancy of feeling it is superior to *Lycidas Adonais.* It is something new and important in the history of English lyric, The poet's grief is real, not conventionel, for his loss was personal and its expression, though sober and restrained is, deeply touching Besides Major Gregory, Yeats remembers and recalls to mind three other friends individually in a few lines. He loved these friends. Lyrics like *Beautiful Lofty Things* and *The Municipal Gallery Revisited* are ventilations of profound personal sorrow at

the loss of friends and relatives who will never live in flesh and blood again. Yeats' lyrics of reminiscence are a complete refutation of the charge levelled against him of coldness and lack of humanity. They pulsste with human passion and emotion. In such personal, particularised ganerosity of feeling no modern poet stands anywhete near Yeats.

The Love-lyrics of Yeats in the beginning were a vague fleeting emotion. His heroes wander in the fairy land in search of imaginary ice eyed queens, portrayed after the wild passionate heroines of Shelley. The poet at the outset is more in love with love itself than with any particular lady. It was his meeting with Maud Gonne at the age of twenty-three that kindled in his breast a love for a real physica antity and transformed him into a great love-poet. He fell instantly in love with her and his devotion to her was passionate and life-long In spite of their boast that they would immortalise the beauty of the woman they loved, few have succeeded like Yeats who perpetuated the classical beauty and majestic figure of his beloved. The mistress of Shakespeare and Sydney's beloved remain mere shadows in their sonnets. A painter could have given us a better and clearer idea about them and their beauty. But if every painting of Maud Gonne disappearen and lost, something of her would remin credible in Yeats' verses. He painted her as words can, dynamically, viewing her physique as manifestation of the soul, as in the following:

With beauty like a tightened bow, a kind
That is not natural in an age like this,
Being high and solitary and most stern.

or in the following:

Tall and noble but with face and bosom
Delicate in colour as apple blossom.

Maud Gonne is everywhere in the verses of *The Rose*, (1893) and *The Wind Among the Reeds*, (1899). Much of the love poetry in these volumes is impersona and symbolic. The poet does not avow his love personally, but dramatically through such symbols as Michael Robertes, Hanrahan Aedh etc , but we know that the poignancy and ecstasy of these lyrics have a personal slant and significance. It is the poet who speaks his mind through his characters and Maud Gonne's face is everywhere. The lyrics are a glowing tribute of a lover passionately paid to his mistress:

But I, being poor, have only my dreams,
I have spread my dreams under your feet,
Tread softly because you tread on my dreams.

The ecstasy of personal love inspires :

You need but life a pearl-pale hand
And bind up your long hair and sigh,
And all men's hearts must burn and beat.

The awareness of the ugliness of reality assailing his image of his lady-love throws the poet in an unhappy and unsettled mood. All things "*uncomely and broken*", "*Are wreigng your image that blossoms a rose in the deeps of my heart,*" Such love-lyrics deserve to be valued at par with the greatest love-verse of the 20th Century. Yeats associates his vision of her beloved with everything he applies his touch to. He may write to Cathaleen or of the stage and players, but every woman tends to take the face and figure of Maud Gonne.

His passion for Maud Gonne was violent, and it was the frustration of this violent passion that turned Yeats into one of the top-ranking poets of the modern age. In the view of one critic he is the greatest love-poet of English language. With the likely exception of Donne, all others look pale and bloodless in comparison with him. In his later love-poetry, the expression of love is direct, frank and poignant. The love-lyrics written after 1903 when Maud Gonne married Major Macbride, have two chief features : (1) They give vent to his bitter disillusionment and (2) They are marked by a complexity of moods and tones. The poet is heart-broken, and his frustration sometimes assumes the tone of angry outburst :

Pardon that for a barren passion's sake,
Although I have come close on forty-nine
I have no child, I have nothing but a book,
Nothing but that to prove your blood and mine,

In another place, the expression is more sober and self-controlled, but the very restraint heightens the intensity of the lyric :

Sweet heart, do not love too long,
I loved long and long,
And grew to be out of fashion
Like an old song.

Or, again as follows :

Never give all thy heart, for love
Will barely seem worth thinking of
To passionate women, if it seemed certain,

In *Adam's Curse*, written on the eve of Maud Gonne's marriage, the poet's mood of impatience and indignation reflects his consciousness of the impending disastor and doom. At other times, the unrequired love causes resignation and the poet asks, "Why should I blame her that she filled my days with misery." The complexity of mood and the shift in tone in Yeats' later love-lyrics are symptoms of his mastery over his craft and of the depth and intensity of his feeling. He could not forget Maud Gonne up to the end of his days and his face keeps peeping out of his poetry in one guise or the other. Even in as late a lyric as *Among School Childrer* she draws him into the past and

sets him to see her own image in one of the scholars. In *A Bronze Head* she is credited with some mysterious, supernatural force; Helen and Dierdre are symbols of her disastrous and destructive beauty, recurring again and again.

Considering Yeats' achievement as a lyricist we find, in the first place, that he has expanded the scope of the lyric by compressing vastness into a narrow compass. In the short lyric entitled *No Second Troy*, he has affected a fusion of the past, the present and the future by using the Helen-Dierdre-Maud Gonne image, creating the impression of simultaneous compression and expansion, accompanied by a corresponding increase in intensity. The same impression is created in the lyric *Leda and the Swan*.

In the second place, Yeats released the English lyric from the irksome monotony of the *iambic* metre. We see him using varied metres and stanza-forms. He shows considerable skill in the use of the long verse-line, and in the arrangement of punctuations in such lines. At other times, he displays like Donne originality and art in the stanza-structure, that is, thought and emotion determine the form of the structure of the first stanzas which is adhered to in the subsequent stanzas. The range of Yeats' gaits is staggering.

In the third place, his lyrics possess a cheerful air of songs. Musical speech accompained by a stringed instrument had been one of his pre-occupations from early days, and this developed his faculty of hearing to the sense of stress and cadence. Thus he is able to impart to his lyrics their individual singing note. His ears could guide him in the matter of vitalising his rhythms by natural strees and pause, and he writes line after line which may be called heightened speech. His later lyrics possess the ring, vitality and movement of actual speech. At other times, lightness of song results from assurance as in the *Crazy Jane* group of lyrics and in those grouped under *Words for Music Perhaps*. A learned critic opines that the lightness of song comes not so much from simplicity as from a kind of assurance, when the tongue finds speech for what is believed in the bones whether or not it echoes a common faith. This assurance differentiates Yeats from all his contemporaries. As he advanced in age, his idea grew lonelier and profound, but his power of song increased. The lyric tune grows from the words themselves, not imposed on it from without. He often sings light-heartedly from this assurance as well as from his relish for life which he maintained up to the last. Even the lyrics of his last phase throb with passionate excitement. Yeats is unique indeed among English poets.

Q. 45. Examine the claim : "Yeats's strength in poetry is the strength of his Irishness."

Or

Write a note on Yeats's Irish heritage.

Ans. Yeats may be said to belong to both Ireland and England, because his poetry follows both the Irish and the English traditions. He wrote in the English language influenced by the English poets like Shelley, Spenser, the Pre-Raphaelites etc., but by birth upbringing and free choice he was the poet of the Irish tradition. He has been acclaimed as the National poet of Ireland. In order, therefore, to understand his poetry it is necessary to form an idea of the peculiarities of Ireland as he knew them and also of the social and literary trends of England of his times.

Ireland is different from England in her economy, religion, tradition and ways of thought as also in the very earth and sky. Every hill and dale, every river and tree in Ireland is haunted by some spirit or ghost. Every piece of land, every ruined tower or building has local associations. It is a land of shadows, spirits and memories little effected by the march of civilization. Yeats, with this spirit-world outlook, stormed Europe with a new imagery, a new mythology and new legends in his poetry. His heroes, kings and fairy people are all of Irish origin.

Ireland is a country the bulk of the population of which is peasant. People live in cottages separated from one another. There lie sprawled dim, dark forests, interspersed with verdant vegetation and landscapes only sparsely populated. It is the least industrialised country in Western Europe and the number of midd e class families is very small. We find mention in Yeats' poefry of sea-borne trade but not all of factory-owners and captains of industry. The only people referred to there are the peasants and the big landlords. At the time Yeats began to write big families were rapidly disintegrating and disappearing He writes at length of the big houses and evinces a nostalgic feeling for them. The aristocratic bias (of the poet) is discernible in the cold, proud, woman, his portrayal of love as a grand, distant passion, in the subje.t matter, so frequently kings, heroes and their contentions. He gives wide berth to industrial tension and tumult, and thus his poetry takes on a peculiar pastoral serenity.

Besides being a peasant-dominated country, Ireland is pre-eminently a Catholic land. While a majority of the prominent families in Yeats' time were Protestants, the masses were, as even now, mostly Catholic. The typical landlord of Yeats' days in Ireland had handed down from father to son a contemptuous attitude towards Catholocism which partook of both social and religious character from very incep ion. He was generally loyal to British government, although it was his class that furnished most

of the leaders to the Irish revolution Being self-conscious and proud of his old family, he did not mix with the common Catholic people. Yeats himself had descended from an old Protestant family and that may be the reason for his temperamental aloofness. The education imparted to the people was unscientific, with the result that belief in angels, devils and ghosts continued to obsess the Catholic masses. Their Protestant landlords, because of their hatred for such superstition and idolatory, kept themselves cut off from the stream of popular culture. Thus the Irish scene was split in two mutually exclusive sectors and this division between the classes and the masses might have contributed to the conflict of opposites in Yeats' personality. He was suspended between two worlds.

Advent of Christianity in Ireland made little inroads into the superstitious domain of the Irish masses. The Irish tradition goes that Gods lived all over the country before the invasion of Gales of the land. The Gods fought the invaders, but ultimately a settlement was reached between the invarders and the invaded according to which the gods yielded possession of the level plains to the Gales and themselves withdrew into the hills where they are supposed to live still. It was also supposed that before the Gods there were darker powers in occupation of the country of whom a few still survive. Thus the country is in the occupation of gods and spirits alike, and they are held in reverence and awe. Their deeds in different places are remembered, history trails away into myth and myth is projected forward into history. There are fairy hills which are out of bounds to the farmer folks. The people fear their wrath and do everything within their power to propriate them. Christianity still attacks this pagan faith of the people, but without any appreciable success.

Politics loomed large in Ireland in Yeats' time. England ruled the country, but the rulers were harsh and unsympathetic towards the people. The war of independence was raging, the spirit of nationalism was in ascendence and people's thoughts were full of it. Children were told tales of English butchery and brutality and purile minds were deeply stirred. Irish leaders like O'Donnel, Waife Tone, Robert Emmet. were idolised and lionised. Their heroic performances struck the popular imagination. There took place many violent uprising of the people against England and there was ruthless repression and bloodshed. The British mercinaries, the Black and Tans, had let loose a reign of terror and the memory of the people was "Dragon ridden." The smell of blood pervaded the air and everything assumed a political meaning. And Yeats was bound to take note of the situation.

Yeats is the national poet of Ireland not only because of his producing a few political lyrics but because of his arousing the

spirit and soul of his native land and lending a voice to it. It is impossible to understand his poetry shorn off his patriotic outlook and attitude to conditions in his contemporary times that prevailed in Ireland and affected the life and living of the Irish masses.

Q. 46. From the poems you have read, indicate how the poetry of the later Yeats' is a remarkable positive achievement.

Ans. In his later poetry Yeats freed himself from his immature earlier style and manner. In his later years he brought out significant volumes of poems such as *The Responsibilities*, *The Wild Ewans at Coole*, *Michael Roberts and the Dancer*, *The Tower* and *The Winding Stair and Other Poems*.

Yeats' later poetry is distinguished for richness, complexity and intricacy. This richness is the outcome of the fullness of Yeats' life, because his style was attaining maturity at the same time as his life. This richness arises more particularly from his lumping together of images imported from widely divergent sources and from different levels of experience. The poems are set round some principal key-symbol, but round that central symbol there is a bunch of images, evocative in the extreme. Thus the tower symbol in itself is highly evocative and suggestive. It reminds us of Shelley, Milton, Samuel Palmer and many others, and the effect is considerably enhanced in this way. Other key symbols are the Swan and the Winding Stair round which are arranged other supporting symbols having their own association with them. As a result, a sense of continuous vastness, expanion and complexity is created. On a perusal of these poems, of *The Tower* poems in particular, strata after strata of experience unfolds itself, each of which expands the horizon, affording aesthetic pleasure. Evocative terms and phrases from other writers are sometimes pressed into service to enhance the beauty of effect. At times, the same symbol is used with varied sense in varied contexts ; as is the case with Swan symbol. In this way, the poems are inter-twined and the perusal of one poem sheds light on subsequent poems having the same key-symbol. Yeats' work is one integrated whole.

Round these key symbols are clustered a number of images, which, at this stage of Yeats' maturity, would come in endless continuation. One image gives rise to another. Thus in *A Prayer for My Daughter*, the Helen image calls up the image of Aphrodite who rose out of the spray and chose a bandy-legged Smith for man. This improper union alludes to Maud Gonne's marriage with Macbride. The past is thus brought to link with the present and the personal with the impersonal. This invests the

texture of the poem with unique richness and intricacy whereby the aesthetic pleasure is immensely advanced. The reader needs to be carefully attentive and concentrated to follow Yeats' mature poetry for Yeats is not obscure but rich and complex, and hence difficult for new readers.

Yeats' later poetry has yet another peculiar feature where varied and desperate images are brought together from different levels of experience and different levels of history to enclose incredible vastness within the limited compass of a lyric. Thus in the poem *Leda and the Swan*, the union of the Swan and Leda connotes the union of the spiritual and the physical, of the human and the super-human, of a god (Zeus) and a woman, of the mortal and the immortal. The reference to "burning roof and tower" recalls to one's mind Helen and the destruction of Troy, and that, in its turn, alludes to the destruanve beauty of Maud Gonne. Thus the past and the present are mutually telescoped, showing the poet's mastery in compressing vastness within narrowness which is no less than a miracle of art.

The greatness of Yeats is evident from the fact that his mind now moves with a good deal of briskness from one desperate idea to another and he succeeds in bringing the antimonies of life together and in harmonising them. Opposites like youth and age, spirit and physique, knowledge and power, the past and the present, creation and destruction, change and immobility, progress and standstillness etc.; are all fused into a single whole. Such contradictions are not only rendered but a reconciliation is effected between them.

Such bringing together of life's antimonies is a characteristic feature of the poetry of Donne and his school. It has been called a metaphysical habit of the mind. This habit of Yeats is further seen in the abrupt shift of tone in his poetry. The lyric entitled *Men Improve With Years* opens with a note of sereni y but it soon changes to a sharp and burning intensity of the poet's despair at his vanished youth. Similar is the case with the poem *Mad as the Mist and Snow* which opening on a note of calm placidity and detachment, soon changes first to one of desire and pensive longing and then to the deep despair in the last stanza.

In the later poem's Yeats' mythopoetic imagination is brought into play most advantageously. No modern poet has so much of the mythopoetic gift as he. He had fully utilised Irish and classical mythology ever in the past, but now he is seen creating new myths out of the people he knew. He is constantly recalling to mind relatives, friends and colleages. His imaginative faculty works on their lives or episodes concerning the reto and transfrom them into something heroic and wonderful. In the stories of Hanrahan and Mary Hynes the poet reads the story of his own life and creates out of them personal myths of great beauty. In the poem

'Easter 1916' the impression is created that the people whom the poet has met at close of day belong to a past age, but have come out to play their parts in the present. The suggestion is thus sent abroad that those men and women of the common class and status, know to the poet, hed the heroic stateliness of the legendary figures of the past. Poems like *Leda and the Swan* distil his whole general conception of history into a grand myth of his own creation for though the figures are obtained from ancient records and legends the desing with which they are introduced invests them with fresh significance.

The poet's command over his craft may be further seen and realised from the fact that words respond to his call and he uses them with a master's case and self-confidence to express swift shifts in thought, even abstract thought. Words from different levels are brought together and absorbed. Thus in *The Tower*, a poem in high key, he can absorb such colloquial expression as "lock, stock and barrel" and also use phrases like "dogs tail" to vent his bitterness at his loss of youth. Such sudden comedown from the lofty to the earthly, is a dramatic use of language which delivers judgment by changing the perspective. Even his occasional coarseness and brutality is a sign of his increased command and self-confidence in functioning as a poet and verse-maker.

The language of Yeats' poems of this particular time has been purged of all Pre-Raphaelite ornamentation of his earlier days. It has now grown sharper and severer and adaptable to a wider range of ideas; so that he can now put the starkest facts into the starkest words. Though his characteristic style of expression is still symbolic yet he can combine it impressively with direct and forthright statement of facts when it suits him. His language is cold, bare, hard and clear cut, but he also takes into account and appreciates melodious words and makes casual but profitable use of the beauties of the language without forcing it. His 'style is stripped, and entirely dependent on the intense life of the mind, for which it (his style) has been moulded into a perfect instrument." When he is difficult, the difficulty arises out of the thought and not from expression which is always lucid and often direct and unaffected speech.

Yeats is of the view that the syntax of a poet must have a "natural momentum," and this is much more Important than mere "simplicity of vocabulary." He, therefore, took great pains to capture the natural momentum in the syntax and the poetry of the period is a measure of his success. A Yeats' sentence is often spoken thought developing as it moves. Sample the following :

An affable irregular
A heavily built Falstaffion man,
Comes cracking jokes of civil war,

As though to die by gun-shot were
The finest play under the sun.

Here is objective report with implied comment, and it would be impossible, by doing away with metre, to put it in a sentence more concisely clear. It differs from conversational talk only by the absence of every unnecessary word. Yeats has exercised absolute economy without destroying the 'natural momentum' or the movement of natural speech. He maintains the formal pattern without sacrificing the naturalness of phrase. Yeats' later work always has the authentic ring of speech although he writes in metre. The poems of the period have nerve and movement, so much of them as to make them look belonging organically to actual life. Yeats himself averred that it is all speech rather than writing.

Yeats' later poetry also shows his skill in manipulating a great variety of stanza-patterns. It has been rightly said that the credit of liberating the English lyric from the irksome Iambic foot must go to Yeats In praise of his skill in versification it has been stressed that no modern poet has mastered traditional stanza-patterns of the kind that Chaucer handed down to English poetry through Spenser and the romantics, and no poet of any time has written stanzas at once so rich in music and so compact in thought and phrase. Musical speech, accompanied by a stringed instrument has been Yeats' pre-occupation since earliest days.and consequently his ears were trained and sensitivised to the stress and cadence of poetry. Thus his lyrics have acquired an individual singing note of their own. They are not actual songs, but the words have a merry lilt about them which very much approximates to music. They sing or chant themselves from sheer rightness of sound. The lyrical tone is not imposed but grows from the words themselves despite their intricacy.

At this time, the octollabic line is greatly favoured by the poet, partly because of its effectiveness in epigram and partly because of its conversational suggestion. Increase of freedom in manipulating rhythm,coupled with a growing originality and variety in stanza forms is noticed. He makes increasing use of a technique which Donne so commonly used. The thought moulds the pattern in the first stanza, as 'this stanza pattern becomes the model for succeeding stanzas. His poetry is often cast in moulds of long and irregular verse-paragraphs which the poet manipulates quite skilfully. He can handle equally well both long and short lines.

In the matter of themes, *The Tower* and *The Winding Stair* groups of poems include by common consent the finest product of Yeats' genius. There are two central themes : (1) pre-occupation with age and the vanishing of youth and beauty, and (2) the crisis of the present civilisation seen as part of the cyclic process of history. The theme of Yeats' later poetry has been defined as a wrestling match between the soul in eternity and the soul to time, or the self or the heart as he variously-calis it. This anti-thesis

between the two aspects of human personality is resolved by taking an extra-temporal point of view, i. e., by contemplating a reality lying outside time, as in the poem *Sailing to Byzantium.*

However, it may be that the poetry of the period under study is a conglomeration of myth, history, politics, art, philosophy, friendship, love, the range of subjects being immense, yet all is fused into a single whole by his genius and vision. And this is the true estimate of his greatness. He himself realised that he has been saying the same thing in so many different ways.

Q. 47. Give a brief critical account of W. B. Yeats's use of symbols and myths with suitable references.

Or

Write a brief critical note on W. B. Yeats's use of symbols and myths. Illustrate from the poem you have read.

Or

Indicate how the symbols of Yeats's later poetry reveal the development of his thought and experience.

Ans. There are two ways in which a poet can express himself, first, direct through images which are suggestive and evocative and, secondly, through symbols. Symbolism is necessary for a poet who wants to say more than what meets the ear, wants to suggest something beyond the expressed meaning. When Blake wants to give an idea of the ferocity of Nature he uses the image of the bright burning tiger. The sense of mystery and expansiveness, the feelings of richness and complexity, cannot be communicated in any way other than symbolism. According to Edmund Wilson, the symbolist imitates rather than states. He says, "Symbolism may be defined as an attempt by carefully studied means—a complicated association of ideas represented by a medley of metaphors—to communicate unique personal feelings." The symbolist, therefore, communicates personal feelings, and secondly he expresses himself through images.

Symbols may be of two kinds—(1) Traditional and (2) Personal. Traditional symbols are such stock symbols as have been general use. For instance, 'rose' is a traditional symbol of beauty and has been in use in poetry from the earliest times. As a majority of readers are familiar with such stock symbols, their use increases the charm and pleasure of poetry without introducing any element of complexity or obscurity. Personal symbols, however, are devised by the poet for his own purposes, to express the vague fleeting impressions passing through his mind, or to convey his own sense of

the mystery of life. They express the poet's experience which are often of a mystical nature. As the readers are not familier with such symbols, they create difficulties for them, though at the same time they add to the charm and dignity of the language.

Symbolism as a conscious movement was born in France as a reaction against naturalism and the precision and exactitude of the 'naturalist' school represehted by Zola. The French symbolists, led by Mullarme, condemned mere "exteriority", and led great emphasis on the treatment of the sensations or the representation of the vague, fleeting impressions that constantly pass before the mind's eye. It meant a virtual withdrawal from life, a concentration on inner experience and its expression through the use of symbols. Arthur Symons' views in this connection are worthy of note. He says that the doctrine of mysticism with which all symbolic literature has so much to do, of which it is all so much the expression,.presents us with a theory of life which makes us familiar with mystery, and which seems to harmonise those instincts which make for religion, passion and art, feeling us at once of a great bondage.

Yeats did not know French, and it is doubtful that he ever met Mellarme. Whatever knowledge of the French symbolistic technique he had was derived at second-hand through *Arthur Symons'* translation of the works of *Mellarme*, *Villers*, and other French symbolists or through discussions with him. His own theories of symbolism are derived wholly from those of Arthur Symons. After meeting with him in the nineties, he disowned or repudiated his former theories of art wherein he had advanced the view that Irish writers should revive the Celtic mythology and legend to serve the cause of Irish nationalism, and that they should fix upon their memories the appearances of mountains and rivers and make it visible in all their art. But now he advocated the ideal of art for art's sake, He recommended a rejection of all, impurities, curiosities about politics, about science, about history, about religion. Mere exteriority was to be shunned and rejected in the interest of concentration on inner experience. This return to imagination meant a new technique of expression. We must cast out of serious poetry those energetic rhythms, as of a man running, and the use of those wandering, meditative, organic rhythms which are the embodiment of the imagination, that neither desires nor hates because it has done with time. Art must be freed from all that is casual, from all character and circumstances. Further, he advocated the use of symbols. You cannot give a body (i.e. expression) to something that moves beyond the senses, unless your words are as subtle, as complex, as full of mysterious life as the body of a flower or a woman. Words must be used for their evocative and emotive value so that the poet might convey his complex states of mind, his apprehension of the absolute, or the vague, fleeting sensations constantly passing through the mind.

The influence of these theories is clearly seen in *The Wind Among the Reeds*, 1898. Yeats had al o used symbols in his earlier works, but early symbolism was quite simple, traditional and elementary. Thus his Innisfree symbolises a Utopia, a country of the mind, where one can live in peace, away from the fever and fret of the world. In the *Rose group* of poems, the rose is a traditional symbol of love and beauty. Yeats uses it for absolute Beauty, for absolute Peace, and evokes a sense of suffering, a nostalgia for something unattinable. More often than not the suggested meaning is stated explicitly by the poet himself. In poetising some Irish legends, as the wanderings of Oisin, the poet himself explains the suggested or symbolic significance of the legend. But in the poems comprised in the volume *The Wind Among the Reeds* where he still uses Irish mythology and legends, his symbolism becomes personal, more suggestive and so more complex. He now clothes his personal feelings and emotions in an elaborate garb of mythological symbolism. In his own words, personal emotion is woven into a general pattern of myth and symbol in this volume. Particular moods of the poet's consciousness are personified and given Irish names. Thus Aedh, Hanrahan, Robertes, etc., are used as symbols to express the poet's own love, pain, suffering and ecstasy. The poems in the volume deal one after another with an absolute Beauty seen by the poet in an impersonal vision, but invested with a profound personal significance. And his vision of impersonal Beauty always assumes the form of Maud Gonne. The Sidhe, the Fairies, Aengus, the Celtic gods, the shadowy horses, all have traditional mythological significance, but Yeats infuses them all with a personal meaning and significance. Thus Sidhe, the defeated Celtic gods, are creatures of imagination and are used as symbols to emphasise the severence between the real and the imaginary. Thus there are two plains of meaning, one traditional for the uninitiated reader, and the other personal and symbolic. Yeats' expression thus becomes rich and complex.

However, Yeats' use of symbols is at variance with that of French symbolists in more ways than one. For one thing, Yeats soon freed himself of the influence of the French and returned once more to life and reality. His next volume of work captioned *The Seven Woods* is indicative of the beginning of this change, but he kept on using symbols up to the last. Yeats was a symbolist from the beginning and remained one up to the end. French influence had little to do with his becoming a symbol enthusiast. He stayed outside the movement, watching it from outside and making use of its methods. He went to it merely in quest of a new aesthetics.

In the second place, Yeats' symbolism is contradistinguished from that of the French, because it is mixed up and modified by (1) his belief in magic, and (2) by his nationalist views and outlook. In his *Essay on Magic* he explains that there is a *Great Memory*

and a *Great Mind*, and the aim and object of his poetry is to evoke this great memory and this great mind. His theories of Magic have much to do with his use of symbols. Thus the symbol becomes for him a worker of wonders and a caller-up of angels or devils. Often his symbols take on the character of both politics and magic, and, therefore, they cannot be understood and appreciated without having recourse to his theories of magic. He himself tells us that his Michael Rodertes is the fire reflected in water, Hanharan is fire blown up by the wind, and Aedh is fire burning by itself.

Further, his symbolism is fully and firmly grounded in Irish mythology and legend and this fact imparts to it a precision, a definiteness, a clear lucidity, which the French symbolism is wanting in. Yeats' symbols are not vague or hazy. They have a well-defined forms which perceptibly meet the eye. They are thus not quite obscure and indistinct. The poet gives a detailed description of his symbols as herein below :

I hear the shadowy horses, their long manes ashake,
Their hoofs heavy with tumult, their eyes glammering white,

There are no concrete details, like as in the above, nor su h descriptions that make for solidity and substantiality in the symbols of Mellame and other French Symbolists. It has been rightly remarked that by transplanting his symbolism to Ireland Yeats invested it with strange and national quality. His symbols are at variance with those ordinarily employed by the French, in that they are traditional, systematic, more arbitrary and definite in outline.

Yeats' symbolism has yet another characteristic quality which makes it stand apart from French symbolism. The symbols of Yeats are all-pervasive. There are certain key-symbols round which a number of poems are arranged, and each poem that follows in succeeding order throws light on foregoing ones and illuminates their sense. For example, in *The Rose Volume* of verses, rose is the key-symbol. In these poems, rose symbolically stands for intellectual Beauty, beauty of women (particularly that of Maud Gonne), austerity and also Ireland. Such symbols are not adapted suddenly on the spur of the moment but they are firmly planted in mythology and legends. Likewise, in the poem *The Wild Swans at Coole*, the swan is the ever-recurring symbol. Another symbol which constantly glitters in Yeats' poetry is Helen, symbolising destructive beauty, and the linking up of Helen with Dierdre and Maud Gonne furnishes to the poems like *No Second Troy* an unthinkable vastness, complexity and continuous expansiveness.

As his art grew to maturity, Yeats' symbols became more and more complex and personal. This complex nature of symbols is

manifest in the poems included in *The Tower* and *The Winding Stair* group of the poems. *The Tower* symbol partakes of both traditional and personal character. It was a tower of real physical existence where the poet lived for sometime, and at the same time it is used as a symbol of loneliness and isolation, a secluded place of retreat for the poet. The symbol has also rich associations in that it calls up memories of Milton and Shelley :

He has chosen this place to live in
Because, it may be, of the candle light
From the far tower where Milton's Platonist
Sat late, or Shelley's visionary Prince.

At other times, the tower becomes a symbol of tradition, of national heritage and at still other times of violence, and of blood-thirstiness :

A bloody, arrogant power
Rose out of the race,
Uttering, mastering it,
Rose like these walls from these
Storm-beaten cottages.

In *A Prayer for My Daughter*, the tower hints at the poet's vision of the dark and dismal future of humanity. All these associations and suggestions associated with the tower, make it a symbol of high complexity. While they add to the richness and elegance of the poem they also add to the perplexity and bewilderment of the reader. The complexity of symbolism is no less intriguing in the *Byzantium* group of the poems. Such intricacy of symbols increases the obscurity of Yeats' poetry.

Yeats was a symbolist from the very outset of his poetic career up to the last, even before and after the brief spell of French influence. As his powers attained maturity, his symbols acquired richness of associations, evocative quality and intricacy. Symbolism enabled him to make his visions and trances concrete and substantial. Only in this way he could convey to his readers a definite picture of his vague fleeting sensations and experiences. Symbolism helped him to express the richness of man's deeper reality, something mystical in essence.

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Q. 48. Write an essay on the art and technique of Yeats' use of diction and versification.

Ans. Yeats had two main methods of poetic creation, one spontaneous and the other a laborious process entailing much alteration and substitution. This second method is more characteristic of Yeats. He was a consicous artist who polished and repolished his verse to say, what he had to say, in the best possible words.

The following lines from ***The Adam's Curse*** **throw a sidelight on his** artistic methods :

> *I said, "A line will take us hours may be,*
> *Yet if it does not seem a moments' thought*
> *Our stitching an unstitching has been naught."*

Poetry might have come to him as naturally as leaves to a tree, but it certainty did not come easily. In a letter to Robert Bridges he says, 'When I wrote verse, five or six lines in two or three hours were a day's work" Thus he composed slowly and painstakingly like a sincere artist. From his various letters, diaries and unpublished manuscripts in possession of Mrs. Yeats, it has been found that his poems underwent many and radical changes before publication. An appreciable number of his poems were first planned in prose-drafts which were then given a poetic garb. The first poetic draft itself also underwent successive re-writings and revisions till all the faults of metre and rhyme were removed and the final perfect thing achieved. Often he would chant a poem aloud to find the right word which would express his meaning as well as fit into the sound effect which he desired to create. That is why his poems gain in intensity and clarity when read aloud, as he intended them to be. By this painful deliberation he achieved a force of impact that unapproached by any writer of the 20th Century.

Not only did Yeats prepare prose-draft of his poems before casting them into poetic frame, he also kept up revising his poems even after they were published. This practice remained his habit all through his career and he would insert substantial changes both in vocabulary and syntax. That is so much the case that a critic speaks of the "Two styles of Yeats", the styles of his early and later poetry. He was constantly making and maturing himself, and his revisions were not merely stylistic alterations but also a renewal which showed a corresponding change in his attitude to wards life :

> *The friends that have it I do wrong,*
> *Whenever I remake a song,*
> *Should know what issue is at stake ;*
> *It is myself that I remake.*

Yeats' early poetry is in the 19th Century romantic tradition, and its style is in harmony with the dreamy atmosphere of his early world of magic and enchantement. The diction is easy, mild, laden with metaphors and epithets, and poetic dainty-footed words. Though coloured very much, yet the colours are weak and misty, in keeping with the tone that is wistful and nostalgic. The imagery there is profuse, ornate and word-pictures abound. The poetry is overhung with pre-Raphaelite tapestry, and it speaks with a sweet, mellifluous, feminine voice. The poet thinks that words alone are certain good, and is carried away by their attractive charm.

However, Yeats soon began to feel dissatisfied with the early style, and his early poems were revised and modified both in syntax and vocabulary, showing his change of attitude towards life. The revisions indicate his anxiety to bring his poetry nearer to life and to make it real and natural. The change is noticeable as early as the time of his poem *Adam's Curse* (1902) and it gets more and more pronounced with the passage of years. The poet is moving in the direction of common speech and is ever repeating his formula that a poet must use natural words in the natural order, and must endeavour to bring his language nearer to every day speech. Poetic inversions are eschewed and the expressions acquired added precision and directness. In the later phase many of his verse lines are simply prose given a versified garb. The line—"Go watch the road between the wood and the tide" is an illustration of the spirit of prose with the quality of poetry still retained. He aimed at natural momentum in the syntax and achieved it in later poetry.

In vocabulary too, an attempt to get near to common speech is evident. Archaism and poeticism are done away with and the words are given a harder make. Images become more definite and accurate and acquire a new substantiality and steadiness. The colouring grows more brilliant, and there is a growing bias in favour of harsh and pinching words reflecting the poet's bitterness and disillusionment. Harsh and jarring words, such as "coughing," "rugged", "narrow" etc., are used to convey the harshness of reality. The soap-bubble colours now vanish and his verse grows severe. definite, precise and harsh. Verbiage and superfluity are discarded in favour of a corresponding gain in vigour and intensity. His diction is terse and epigrammatic now ; and density is its peculiar feature. His revisions show that often whole lines are clipped, and simpler but more effective line is substituted. The poet, in his own words, has cast off old mythological embroideries and prefers to walk naked. But this nakedness does not produce a loss in effectiveness, but lends to his poetry a rare masculine vigour and intensity, so that his diction though unadorned and plain, is sinewy. This grows bony like a skeleton and gains in richness and complexity.

Yeats is a metrical artist of consummate skill. He experimented with various metres and stanza forms descending from Chaucer through Spenser. No modern poet has so mastered traditional stanza-forms of the kind vouch-safed to Romantics by Chaucer, and perhaps none of any time has written stanzas at once so rich in music and so compact in thought and phrase. Freeing the English lyric from the exactions of the Iambic and using the long line with telling effect, he showed with surpassing skill the full conversational possibilities of the octosyllabic couplet. He skilfully handles an irregular stanza too. In accord with Donne-like pattern, the thought and emotion determine the structure of

the first stanza and subsequent stanzas follow the first in pattern. Few poets can complete with Yeats in the manipulation of pause, stress and cadence. But despite his mastery over traditional metres, Yeats is not enamoured of the modern *verse libre* and other verse experiments. The rhythm of modern life is beyond his reach.

Yeats' lyrics possess an individual singing note. They are not songs, but their words have a musical lilt. The musical note in his verse is not imposed. It grows naturally from the words themselves which are carefully chosen with reference to their sense and sound both. In a passage as follows :

Though now it seems,
As if some marvellous empty sea-shell flung
Out of the obscure dark of the rich streams,
And not a fountain, were the symbol which
Shadows the glory of the rich.

musical reasonance and the turning of sensations into sounds have become a sort of conjuring trick ; he is performing rather than speaking. An Yeats' sentance is spoken thought developing as it moves. When at his best the lightness of song generates from assurance more than from simplicity. when the tongue finds speech for what is believed in the bones. Thus in the *Words for Music Perhaps Crazy*—Jane sings of his profoundest metaphysical vision with all the lightness of a song.

As a metrical artist, Yeats possesses the surpassing ability to modulate his rhythm to be in tune with the spirit of his verse. Yeats' early verse is escapist, and the atmosphere is dreamy and langurous. In keeping with this other—worldly atmosphere of his poetry his rhythms too are half—entranced, like a man walking alone lost in a train of visionary thought. or incantatory, as if he thought of poetry as a priestly vocation. This haunting, incantatory music dulls the sense of reality and transport the reader to fairy-land. It helps to secure that suspension of disbelief which is poetic faith. But the poet soon outgrew this incantatory music and by the time of *The Wind Among the Reeds* when he is writing pure poetry, he uses wavering,meditative, organic rhythms which are imagination personified, However, this phase of introspective absorption was short-lived and the poet soon came down to earth. His cantact with reality made him bitter and this change is mirrored in his verse-music. There is an increasing tendency to use speech rhythms, often pinching and harsh. Instead of the vague incantatory music of the earlier verse, the rhythms now are of almost Wordsworthian simplicity. By the time of *The Tower* and *The Winding Stair* Yeats is at the pinnacle of his powers. The speech-rhythms of the middle period are still used but in poems like *Sailing to Byzantium* an effect of extra-ordinary richness is generated by linking daily speech to an incantatory design. In Yeats' early poetry, very little of

common life is admitted ; the vocabulary is rather strictly limited to fit in with the general tonality of the later Victorian romanticism, and further limited in the effort to give the effect of Irish folk-literature. In his later poetry, Yeats develops subtler, more varied and more dramatically adjusted cadences ; his vocabulary is greatly expanded with the inclusion of terms both vernacular and scholarly. The metaphors are fresher and taken from a vastly wider range of reference, and the imaginative structure is both more firmly wrought and more spontaneous and natural in effect.

Yeats continued to grow and mature as an artist up to the end of his life. He acquired greater confidence and assurance and manipulated words and phrases with a master's hand. His language became smart, his rhythms quicker and he could rise effortlessly to grandeur and sublimity. He is no longer timid or hesitant in speech but asserts his faith defiantly, even arrogantly. Artistic integrity and sincerity force him to express himself in a downright trenchant manner without reserve. Self-assurance induces in him a tendency to indulge in hyperboles, and this tendency has been regarded as a serious fault of his style. In his later poetry are found over-worked such hyperbolic words as "passionate", "rage", "turbulent", "frenzy", "murderous", "blood and mire", etc., and this hyperbolism soon appears wearisome and hollow, and leads the poet into tremendous, non-sensical asservation. Another drawback in Yeats as an artist is that he rarely chooses his words, phrases, idioms, metaphors and images from contemporary scene. These are certainly serious faults but they do not detract from his true greatness as an artist. He wrote from inner compulsion as a true artist should, and this inner compulsion imparts to his poetry its peculiar inner glow and classes it among our poetical monuments if not precisely among monuments of unageing intellect.

10
T. S. Eliot

Q. 49 T. S. Eliot has propounded his theory of poetry to defend his own poetry against hostile critisism. Discuss.

Ans. Eliot's theory of poetry is directly opposed to the romantic theory of poetry which we first find in the critical writings of Wordsworth and Coleridge. The romantic theory is that poetry is the expression of the personality of the poet. The poet at the moment of inspiration feels certain emotions deeply. These emotions give him a peculiar pleasure. He wants to share this pleasure and joy with others and therefore expresses his personal emotions and experiences in the form of poetry. The personality of the poet, therefore; plays a very vital role in artistic creation, and the romantic theory does not attach any significance to tradition is very necessary for artistic creation. Eliot does not agree to this view of poetry and propounds his own theory of poetry. He believes that tradition plays a very vital role in artistic creation and lays stress on the impersonality of poetry.

Eliot has expressed his views on the importance of tradition and the poetic process most clearly in the essay entitled *Tradition and the Individual Talent*. In the beginning he makes a reference to the common tendency of praising those parts of a poet's work in which he least resembles anyone else. Eliot condemns this tendency and says that "not only the best, but the most individual parts of his (a poet's) work may be those in which the dead poets, his ancestors, assert their immortality most vigorously."

Tradition, however, is not static or passive "in following the ways of the immediate generation before us in a blind or timid adherence to its success." Eliot discourages this notion of tradition. Tradition is dynamic; it cannot be inherited; it can be obtained only by great labour. The most important element in tradition, according to Eliot, is the 'historical sense'. He defines it in the following manner, "the historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence; the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order. This historical sense, which is a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and of the temporal together, is what makes a writer traditional.

And it is at the same time what makes a writer most acutely conscious of his place in time, of his own contemporaneity."

An artist, when considered alone, has no importance. He has significance only when he is compared and contrasted with other poets Eliot's views here are note-worthy. He says, "when a really new work of art is created, the whole existing order altered (if only slightly). In this way the past is altered by the present and the present is directed by the past. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relations to the dead poets and artists. You cannot value him alone, you must set him, for contrast and comparison, among the dead I mean this as a principle of aesthetic, not merely historical criticism. The necessity that he shall conform, that he shall cohere, is not one-sided; what happens when a new work of art is something that happens simultaneously to all the works of art which preceded it. The existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves, which is modified by the introduction of the new (the really new) work of art among them. The existing order is complete before the new work arrives; for order to persist after the supervention of novelty, the *whole* existing order must be, if ever so slightly, altered; and so the relations, proportions, values of each work of art toward the whole are readjusted; and this is conformity between the old and the new. Whoever has approved this idea of order, of the form of European, of English literature will not find it preposterous that the past should be altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past."

The artist can neither take the past as a lump, an indiscriminate bolus,' nor can he form himself wholly on one or two private admirations, nor can he form himself wholly upon one preferred period. To be traditional in Eliot's sense means to be conscious of the main current of art and poetry. He says : "The poet must be very conscious of the main current, which does not at all flow invariably through the most distinguished reputations. He must be quite aware of the obvious fact that art never improves, but that the material of art is never quite the same. He must be aware that the mind of Europe—the mind of his own country—a mind which he learns in time to be much more important than his own private mind—is a mind which changes, and that this change is a development which abandons nothing *en route*, which does not superannuate either Shakespeare, or Homer, or the rock drawing of the Magdalenian draughtsmen. That this development, refinement perhaps, complication certainly, is not, from the point of view of the artist, any improvement. Perhaps not even an improvement from the point of view of the psychologists or not to the extent which we imagine; perhaps only in the end based upon a complication in economics and machinery. But the difference between the present and the past is that the conscious present is an awareness

of the past in a way and to an extent which the past's awareness of itself cannot show."

Eliot covers the possible objection that his doctrine requires a ridiculous amount of erudition and that much learning deadens or pervert poetic sensibility. He says that there is a distinction between knowledge and pedantry. "Some can absorb knowledge, the more tardy must sweat for it. Shakespeare acquired more essential history from Plutarch than most could from the whole British Museum. What is to be insisted upon is that the poet must develop or procure the consciousness of the past and that he should continue to develop this consciousness throughout his career."

The artistic process, according to Eliot, is a process, of depersonalization, the artist's continual surrender of himself as he is at the moment to something which is more valuable. "The progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality." He also points out the relation of the poem to its author ; the poem, according to him, has no relation to the poet. The difference between the mind of a mature poet and that of an immature one is that the mind of a mature poet is "a more finely perfected medium in which special, or very varied, feelings are at liberty to enter into new combinations."

Eliot explains this process of depersonalization and its relation to the sense of tradition by comparing it to a chemical process—the action which takes place when a bit of finely filiated platinum is introduced into a chamber containing oxygen and sulphur dioxide. The analogy is that of the catalyst. He says : "When the two gases previously mentioned (oxygen and sulphur dioxide) are mixed in the presence of a filament of platinum, they from sulphurous acid. This combination takes place only if the platinum is present ; never the less the newly formed acid contains no trace of platinum, and the platinum itself is apparently unaffected : has remained inert, neutral, and unchanged. The mind of the poet is the shred of platinum. It may partly or exclusively operate upon the experience of the man himself ; but the more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates ; the more perfectly will the mind digest and transmute the passions which are its material."

The elements of the experience of the poet are of two kinds: emotions and feelings. The experience may be formed out of one emotion, or may be a combination of several ; and various feelings, inhering for the writer in particular words or phrases, or images, may be added to compose the final result or great poetry may be made without the direct use of any emotion whatever : composed out of feelings solely. "The poet's mind is in fact a receptacle for

seizing and storing up numberless feelings, phrases, images, which remain there until all the particles which can unite to form a new compound are present together."

Eliot believes that the greatness of a poem does not depend on the greatness or the intensity of the emotions but on the intensity of the artistic process, the pressure under which the fusion takes place. Eliot illustrates his theory by a few examples. The artistic emotion evoked by Dante in his treatment of the episode of Paolo and Francesca is different from the actual emotion in the situation. The artistic emotion may approximate to the actual emotion, as in *Agamemnon*, or *Othello*. In *Agamemnon* the artistic emotion approximates to the emotion of an actual spectator ; in *Othello* to the emotion of the protagonist himself. "But the difference between art and the event is always absolute." "The ode of Keats contains a number of feelings which have nothing particular to do with the nightingale, but which the nightingale, partly perhaps because of its attractive name, and partly because of its reputation, served to bring together."

Eliot attacks the metaphysical theory of the substantial unity of the soul. He says that "the poet has, not a 'personality' to express, but a particular medium (the mind), which is only a medium and not a personality, in which impressions and experiences combine in peculiar and unexpected ways. Impressions and experiences which are important for the man may take no place in the poetry, and those which become important in the poetry may play quite a negligible part in the man, the personality."

The reason for the eccentricity in poetry, according to Eliot, is the attempt of the poet to seek new emotions to express. He says : "The business of the poet is not to find new emotions, but use the ordinary ones and, in working them up in poetry, to express feelings which are not in actual emotions at all. And emotions which he has never experienced will serve his turn as well as those familiar to him." Here Eliot rejects Wordsworth's definition poetry as "emotion recollected in tranquillity," It is neither emotion, nor recollection nor, without distortion of meaning, tranquillity. The poetic process is a process of concentration, and not recollection, of a very great number of experiences ; and this concentration is not conscious or deliberate. He also believes that, in the writing of poetry, there is a great deal which must be conscious. or deliberate. "In fact, the bad poet is usually unconscious where he ought to be unconscious. Both errors tend to make him 'personal." "Eliot's final and oft-quoted view of poetry is : "Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality."

In the last section of the essay Eliot says that the poet's sense of the tradition and the impersonality of poetry are complementary things. He tries to divert the interest from the poet to the poetry, for it would conduce to a juster estimation of actual

poetry, good or bad. He says that "very few know when there is an expression of *significant* emotion, emotion which has its life in the poem and not in the history of the poet. The emotion of art is impersonal. And the poet cannot reach this impersonality without surrendering himself wholly to be the work to be done. And he is not likely to know what is to be done unless he lives in what is not merely the present but the present moment of the past, unless he is conscious, not of what is dead, but of what is already living.

Q. 50. Eliot has been a poet who continually grew in his poetic technique. Discuss.

Ans. The art of T. S. Eliot is the art of a creative artist. His poetry embodies forth the art-emotion and art-thought. In his case it is true that a poet is as well an artist as a painter with figment or a singer with instrument. Before Eliot, poets as an artist were preoccupied with form-explorations, but with him they learnt thought-explorations, as was the business of the Metaphysical poets under the leadership of Donne. Being a'traditionalist' Eliot worked his way out through "the lack of a convention."

Eliot's 'classicism' is not like that of his predecessors or contemporaries which,no doubt,was "the classicism of the surface", "artificial and finicky". "With Georgian poetasters rippling round him Eliot set himself to establish principles of a sound classicism. He stands for 'order' in literature ; and order implies authority— not that of Aristotle or Boileaue, or any other single law-giver, but not less sure because it is distributed among the whole body of writers who have contributed to the great tradition of literature." But by 'tradition' Eliot does not mean the imitation of the continued process of old ways of doing things. Eliot implies here, like Benedetto Croce who said that history is humanity's memory of its own past, that "the conscious present is an awareness of the past." We know more than 'dead writers', but they are 'that which we know'. Thus the historical sense so irrevocably required for a poet-artist to serve as a guideline for his poetic work, made rich with the huge storage of memory. It is this sense that "compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones", and that "composes a simultaneus order."

Eliot has been a poet who continually grew in his poetic technique and poetic vision. It would be recalled that Eliot's technique or method of approch to the verse-writing presents a panoroma of life with various cinematic shots. His technique is though apparent in all his poems, yet is most dominant in '*The Waste Land*', '*The Hollow Men*' and '*Gerontion*' 'most particularly in '*The Waste Land*'. According to Miss M. C. Bradbrook, "By a

technique not unlike that of the early Russian films, Eliot gives a series of 'shots' which when put together do form a single sequence."

Eliot's poetic technique is consonant with the spirit of the time. As the 20th century consists of stark,bare, harsh and burning realities, his verse is also stark, bare, direct, irregular, destitute of all embellishments. Eliot was highly impressed by Donne's technical discoveries, which did not belong to him alone. Donne's great achievement lay in his ability to convey "his genuine whole of tangled feelings". It is for such an effect that Eliot struggles in his own art and technique. Like, Donne's Eliots sensibility aimed at the "alliance of levity and seriousness."

Whatsoever, Eliot was whole-heartedly on the side of the psychologists in his art and technique. His technique is "thus, that of Henry James, Virginia Woolf and Dorothy Richardson, the pillars of the technique of 'stream-of-consciousness' in English novel. It was so necessitated by the urge of the age. "This intimate inner necessity is bound up with the history of the age in which the poet lives, with its main movements of thought and feeling." This is what led to Wordsworth's rebellion in poetry in his day, and explains Eliot's own practice of irregular verse. "Any radical change in poetic form is likely to be the symptom of some very deeper change in society and in the individual."

So Eliot wanted some fundamental changes in modern English poetry. He wished to disturb the conventional consciousness, in which the shock tends to be "by its syntax more than by its sentiments." Speaking strictly, versification "is essentially a disturbance of the conventional". Eliot, like his master Donne in the 17th century, is most concerned with regularity and irregularity in verse. It is this contrast between fixity and flux, this unperceived evasion of monotony which is the very life of verse." The Imagists had been clamouring around him for 'free verse' when Eliot was beginning to write, but he became its most penetrating critic and declared outright that "the is no freedom in art", except that agains an artificial background. Yet Elio t admits of a debt to the theories of *'verslibre'*, because through them he could realize that there were other ways of writing poetry than that of the Georgians whose constant esepectation of rhyme had "thickened the modern ear". Eliot could now leap forward in his perception that 'rhyme removed, much etherial music leaps up from the word'. In this he was greatly influenced by Hopkins whose technique of sprung-rhythm has been one of the 'discoveries' for poets since the First World War. He was conscious of 'the erudite complexities' of Swinburne's versification and the reaction against it in the 'new poetry', but he belived, at the same time, that this reaction should lead us to more form and not less. That is why he wrote several poems in his 1920 volume in the tight quatrains of

Gautier as a correlative to the flowing excesses of 'free verse', to write compact verse in which the mind of the poet should be actually felt to be moving.

Eliot's technical experiments are not simply imitations of other poets. As a craftsman he belives that the most satisfactory verse ever written in English was when it broke through the conventional pattern, such as in the later plays of Shakespeare or in the tragedies of Webster. As a craftsman, he pays heed to the maintenance of rhythm over rhyme, of word-music over complex metres—that "a man who devises new rhythms is a man who extends and refines own sensibility ; and that is not merely a matter of 'technique."

Eliot contended that some writers think to be modern by following 'the journalistic details' (Matthiessen, p. 88), which separate the present from the past. But Eliot's stand point is different. He knows that "one is not modern by writing about chimney-pots. or archaic by writing about oriflammes.'

On the contrary, the mature artist must combine "the most ancient and the most civilized mentality." It is then that his experience would be 'deeper than civilization'. Eliot, to introduce modernity in his poetry, goes to record the effective machine—images, just as we find in *'The Waste Land'* :

> "......, *when the human engine waits*
> *Like a taxi, throbbing waiting.*"

or again,

> "*She smoothes her hair with automatic hand,*
> *And puts a record on the gramophone.*"

This is part of the idiom in usage, and expresses "moments of fragile beauty" in the city. The rich and broken music of '*Ash Wednesday*' and the syncopated rhythms of '*Sweeney Agonistes*' are equally evocative of modern life.

The imagery which Eliot draws in his poems is bold, bare, naked, unconventional, taken from the most ordinary, often even from filthy regions against a beautiful natural phenomenon. It is really repugnant to compare the beautiful sunset and evening with a patient lying on the operation table. But Eliot takes delight in it, *Preludes* and *Rhapsody on a Windy Night* develop the "imagery of Urban disillusion". He mixes the reminiscent (conventionl or literary) in imagery with the immediately evocative. So his poems are full of references to several writers, chief among them being Dante, Donne, Shakespeare and Milton. It is Eliot's practice to take 'an item from one context and shifting into another in which it assumes a new and powerful meaning." And these serve as parallelisms and contrasts, have got one meaning at one place and quite different at another.

The poems, therefore, though quite rich have often become quite obscure.

Eliot's method varies between direct creation and evolution. Fundamentalism and modern science agree in his verse. His verse has a perpetual interplay between the surface images and an underlying dramatic situation or a set of situations. He exploits the dramatic situation in poetry through 'modern imagery', which covers a very wide range, from geology to golfcourses and in which unaesthetics and machines are brought in freely. Yet his poetry does not suffer from over-concentratedness, over-allusiveness, and lack of finish or incompleteness, defects so common in the younger poets of the past-war generation. He progresses towards greater inclusiveness and with him poetry retires into its shell. So his poetry is meant for the select few, not for all. Along with it he revives into English poetry precision, the blade which the Imagists had sharpened but never employed.

Eliot's idea had been that 'poetry is something to be looked through, not at.' He liked to see it "so transparent that in reading it we are intent on what it points at and not on the poetry." Hence his poetry is quite bare and common not only in diction and language but also in imagery, which is quite poignant too. He never tried to introduce arresting imagery or references to sensual experience. His similes, metaphors and symbols are wedded to the ideas of his poems and thus they are a most brilliantly integrated whole. The fact is that "for the symbolists, poetry was an art that should not inform but suggest and evoke, not name things but create their atmosphere ;...while for T.E. Hulme's 'hard, dry classical verse' the 'great aim is accurate, precise and definite description'. Both these strains meet in Eliot's verse......" Thus T.S. Eliot combines in his poetry the precision of the Imagists and the suggestion of the Symbolists : but he is one who is content to rely on the eviaence of his eyes.

Eliot devoted himself in his early poems to traditional culture and what is the best to the extent aud depth of his knowledge—*After such knowledge, what forgiveness* ? In them we find the use of modern imagery and idiom, and the compression in statement, all converging into an interlocking complexity to be seen in his later poems. With the change in style and the use of imagery, the problems of life and death, of god and Universe, of Time and Eternity catch his attention most in his later poetry.

Eliot has been lavishly praised for his 'Auditory Imagination'. Chapters have been devoted on this single topic for discussion by critics like F. O. Mathiessen and Helen Gardner. Eliot's conception of the 'Auditory Imagination' has been made clear by himself in '*The Use of Poetry*' (1933). He says that it is "the feeling for syllable and rhytlim, penetrating for below the

conscious levels of thought and feeling, invigorating every word; sinking to the most primitive and forgotten, returning to the origin and bringing something back, seeking the beginning the end. It works through meanings certainly, or not without meanings in the ordinary sense, and fuses the old and obliterated and the trite, the current, and the new and surprising, the most ancient and the most civilized mentality."

Eliot's technique is chiefly of illusiveness and reminiscence. Memories, literary, religious and metaphysical, create a history in his works. His economy of statement and sharpness of words and phrases have been commended by critics. He is the master of reticence in style. William Empeson in his essay, '*The Style of the Master*', tells us something in the form of 'a few reminiscences' about the peculiar style of the master. Mr. Empson asked "Do you really think it necessary, Mr. Eliot as you said in the preface to the Pound Anthology, for a poet to write verse at least every week ?"The reply came that what he meant was "to write as little as possible". Similarly, the same man recounts another incidence ar dinner where there was "a very charming diplomat's wife", who remarked to Eliot that she too was very fond of reading. "With pen in hand ?" inquired Mr. Eliot, and went on, "It is the chief penalty of becoming a professional literary man that one can no longer read anything with pleasure." And this goes a long way to explain the style and attitude of the poet himself.

All the foregoing observations would prove inconclusively scattered over the pages, unless we touch the main points made clear by Fei-Pai-Lu in '*T. S. Eliot The Dialectical Structure of His Theory of Poetry*'. Mr. Lu has summed up Eliot's efforts at the verse-writing under three sub—heads : 1. Transmution, 2. Organization, and 3. Resolution. These three points speak well of T. S. Eliot as an artist and his organic sensibility and technique of writing poetry. Let us now consider each of the three in brief.

1. Transmutation

Eliot takes the art of poetry, in the first place, as an art of 'transmutation' involved construction of the "semblance" of "reality", the "statement" of "truth", and the "expression" of "meaning". Influenced by Bradley's concept of 'appearance' and 'reality', Eliot suggests that "in a work of art, as truly as anywhere, reality only exists in and through appearance...Poetry is poetry, and the surface is as marvellous as the core". He tells that poetry is born of the meeting of Spirit and Nature. Since 'transmutation' at once involves the idealization of appearance and the objectification of reality, the poetic process lends itself to the finding of 'objective correlative' for the expression of emotion, that 'particular' emotion. But emotion is not entirely out of intellect, since "Every precise emotion tends towards intellectual

formulation." Whatsoever, the unification of thought and feeling is to be had by the "metaphysical" method.

2. Organization

The principle of transmutation is identical to the unity of correspondence, and the principle of 'Organization' is to be likened to the Unity of coherence. Here the problem related to the interdependence of thought, passion, action and words passes on to the problem concerning the unification or organization of parts into the whole.

Eliot broadly distinguishes two types of poetic music : (1) the simple melodious verse which yields the music of sound and (2) the complex verbal organization which is the music of the meaning re-inforced by the music of sound. This is the sum of '*Ezra Pound : His Metric and Poetry*', '*Thinking in Verse*' (1930) '*The Music of Poetry*' (1942). A poem is more 'musical' and hence more poetic. When it commands a greater contextual refinement and better organization.

Eliot holds the observance of the three unities—of time, place, and action—to be useful but inadequate : useful it is because the doctrine recognizes that unity generates poetic intensity; and inadequate it is because unity of time and unity of place are only instrumental to the unity of action, which, in turn is instrumental to and governed by "the unity of inspiration", "the unity of feeling", "the unity of sentiment" and "emotional unity".

"Artistic conscience" is quite distinct from "theatrical skill", as Eliot thinks in case of Philip Massinger. Massinger is a "master of technique" but no "artistic"; his "synthetic cunning" born of "theatrical skill" "welds" but not "unifies". Eliot praises Jonson for his "immense dramatic constructive skill." Poetic technique consists in a 'recognition of the truth that not our feelings but the pattern which we make of our feelings is the centre of value."

There must be a reconciliation of the external and internal clashes as in '*The Family Reunion*' Attempt must be made towards "emotional unity", "moral synthesis" and self-organization. Plot construction and characterization must aim towards this.

Finally, the "good poet" should have a "point of view" ; "soul" to impose a "form" on reality and to change everything into a new perspective. What is artistically relevant is not the source of the materials but their sucessful integration. And the artistic unity is to be sought in the "world", which is a "point of view."

3. Resolution

Resolution deals with the principle of comprehensiveness. "The quality of wit completes, together with unity and intensity, the trinity by which poetry may be identified and evaluated. Wit, according to Eliot, is supposed to be found whenever opposites are resolved and similarity is perceived." There are mainly two divisions of wit—first wit of ideas, such as we find in Donne's '*The Prohibition*', and secondly, 'Wit of Situation'; as in case of Eliot.

Eliot though recognizes that Johnson's use of wit as a rhetorical device is a useful one, yet Cowley's definition of wit in the '*Ode of Wit*' is the more profound—for Cowley realizes that wit is a mode of activity basic to the universal process of unification and characteristic of the divine order. Eliot compares wit to learning, for both imply "richness in experience." He separates it from learning, since learning does not necessarily involve reconciliation and unification which is basic to wit. So also he compares it to cynicism, for both have "constant inspection of experiences". But to Eliot cynicism is not wit, since cynicism involves the negation of all, while wit demands the assimilation of all. It is wit that achieves "poise", "balance" and "equilibrium" in a work of art. To Eliot, poetry is the "language of Wisdom" and "Wisdom is an essential element in making poetry."

In short, form (as seen in 'Transmutation'), design (as traced in 'organization') and wit (as observed in 'Resolution') have each a "religious" as well as a "technical" application in T. S. Eliot's poetry.

Q. 51. Eliot's poetry bears the most important relevance to the interests of the modern man and the modern sensibility in English poetry. Discuss.

Ans. Eliot's genius is that of the great poet who has a profound and acute apprehension of the difficulties of his age. His poetry bears the most important relevance to the interests of the modern man because Eliot was the first modern poet who not only gave expression to modern sensibility in English poetry but also set up new trends and traditions which were adopted and developed by the poets who followed him. The two generations of poets that have succeeded his have been so profoundly affected by his critical pronouncements and poetic practise that it would be hardly an exaggeration to assert that his writings, critical and poetical, have contributed more than any other single influence, to give a new direction to English verse and to endow it with the hall-mark of recognizable contemporaneity. His poetry by virtue of its new imagery, new poetic technique, new versi-

fication and new diction expresses the finest consciousness of the modern age. The modern consciousness has been defined by Stephen Spender in these words, "a sensibility to contemporary phenomena like machinery, the industrial city and neurotic behaviour." The two marks of modern sensibility as mentioned by *The Times Literary Supplement* are "the liveliness that comes from topicality and the difficulty that comes from intellectual, ebstruseness." The topical and the intellectual, the lively and the difficult are superficial effects of modernist work and both these marks of 'modernist' work find expression in the early poetry of T. S. Eliot.

With the early poetry of Eliot, we find ourselves almost at home in the twentieth century—not domesticated in it but moving on its landscape with an uneasy familiarity. Eliot goes further than Yeats or Pound from the innocent world of ancient tragedy in which heroic man exerts his every energy towards the reshaping of Fate itself. His is the 'vulgarly' intimate daily world of the modern in which Baudelaire and other French poets of the last century lost and found themselves, a world for which the writings of Henry Adams, Henry James, and a largely f rgotten poetic generation (that of E. A. Robinson, Henry Babot Lodge, and Trumbull Stickneyt had to some extent prepared the American mind. So profoundly has the self been violated by that world that no retreat into privacy except by way of artistic style seems open to it. Its inhabitants can no more protect their individuality with dignity than could the Little Jo of Dicken's *Bleak House* or the inmates of Chekhov's *Ward Number Six* The awakening of consciousness to brutal. 'objective truth' in the middle and late 1800's has led, in Eliot's twentieth-century world, to new 'laws' of human reality. These laws reflect his sense of a mindless, snatching horror at the heart of life such as we find in his *Rhapsody on a Windy Night.*

The conditions of modern life have altered our perceptions of *rhythm* of modern life. The colloquial flatness and overtones of sophisticated exhaustion are expressed by the various ways in which Eliot beats out his thoughts in wittily syncopated jazz rhythms in *The Waste Land.* "These lines from *The Waste Land*:

At the violent hour when the eves and back
Turn upward from the desk, when the human engine wants.
Like a taxi throbbing waiting.. ...

are innovatory not because they mention a taxi, but the human component of urban life is deeply related to almost identified with what most intimately informs its daily activity, the rhythms of its life, in lines that subtly catch the essence of that raythm, the unending monotony of pulsing machines." (*Maxwell*)

The early poetry of Eliot depicts man's predicament in the modern world. In this connection Delmore Schwartz remarks :

"The width and the height and depth of modern life are exhibit d in his poetry, the agony and the horror of modern life are represented as inevitable to any human being who does not wish to deceive himself with systematic lies. Thus it is truly significant that E. M. Forester in writing of Eliot should recall 1914, and the beginning of the First World War : it is just as significant that he should speak of first reading Eliot's poems in Alexandria (Egypt) during that War, and that he should conclude by saying that Eliot was one who had looked into the abyss and refused hence forward to deny or forget the fact."

Eliot expresses the chaos and disillusionment of modern life by his peculiar technique and the images of the metropolitan life. He presents a certain paltriness in contemporary man.

"No one can more readily call up the dreary associations of filth and fog common to all who know big-city life, and the further psychological associations of hopelessness and loneliness intertwined with them. Minor instances of Eliot's power to evoke such associations may be seen in the imagery of *Preludes* and of *Morning at the Window* ; a major instance in the opening stanzas of *Prufrock*, or in *Burnt Norton* :

Men and bits of paper, whirled by the cold wind
That blows before and after time,
Wind in and out of unwholesome lungs
Time before and time after.
Eructation of unhealthy souls
Into the faded air, the torpid
Driven on the wind that sweeps the gloomy hills of London.
Hampstead and Clerkenwell, Campden and Putney,
Highgate, Primrose and Ludgate.........

Eliot was both a modernist and a traditionalist. He had his own generation in his bones' and the poets of the past in the background. "But Eliot, modernist as he was, had behind him the majestic background of the literature of many ages and had absorbed much of its spirit. He scorned out—worn images and cliches, though he could effectively borrow phrases from wellknown poets, and in so doing, in the new context, create an astonishing new effect. He was to be precise not only in his use of words, but also in the exact, wonderful fitting of their sound to his meaning. There is often a kind of slow stillness in the speech as of a voice far away beyond a mountain, utterely impersonal, interrupted sometimes by colloquialism which brings the voice suddenly near, close to the ear, so that we have a startling contrast between two aspects of the thought,—and thus a new imaginative synthesis."

"Eliot introduced his contemporaries to their own generation So much was that 'in his bones' that he was able to give to the language of poetry a new idiom which is that of our time, employing images which are fresh and vigorous, and a metrical form which discards the banality of the over-familiar, the second-hand, the outworn. He has been so much alive to this generation as to drag to light some of the hidden things which were gnawing at its heart and sapping its spiritual vitality. He is not content merely to expose stupidity, hypocrisy, vanity, but in lifting the veil makes us aware of all mankind, all history behind and the horror of the human soul alone in the Waste Land unless it is redee ed by courage and faith. During the thirty years of continuous writing in which his work has shown developing power, his influence has been primarily among intellectuals, and especially the younger of them. His mind, for all his imagination, is highly intellectualized. Thought comes first with him ; and though ideas with him engender light and heat and, embodied in symbols, become the matter of exciting poetry, the resultant works have proved baffling to those who were not spiritually of his generation and not willing to face the difficulties and open their mind to his spell. The magic was not lacking. The younger poets came under the spell and found in Eliot the inspiration they could not find elsewhere. He brought into poetry something which in this generation was needed : a language spare, sinewy, modern ; a fresh and springy metrical form ; thought that was adult ; and imagination aware of what is bewildering and terrifying in modern life and in all life. He has done more than any other living English poet to make this age conscious of itself, and, in being conscious, apprehensive."

Q. 52. Eliot was a professed classicist and an upholder of tradition. Discuss.

Ans. T. S. Eliot started the literary world by his declaration in 1928 that he was "a classicist in literature, an Anglo-Catholic in religion, and a royalist in politics." (See his Preface to '*For Launcelot Andrews*'). The literatures of Europe, not of England alone, have so many times witnessed the rise and fall of the conflicting forces of Romanticism and Classicism. Eliot was in fact, opposed to the Romantic excesses and diffuseness and was poised on the side of balance and order in literature. T. S. Hulme has the credit to have re-inaugurated in England the era of literary classicism. And none would be audacious enough to search for the romantic element in Eliot's poetry. Eliot toes Arnold, and is followed by F. R. Leavis ennuuciating the principle of 'minority' audience. He is a critic of the line of Ben Jonson, Dryden and Dr. Johnson, with the difference that he is more of a creative critic.

Let us examine Eliot's poetry in the light of its Augustan qualities, though it is somewhat difficult in form from that period.

In the first place, Eliot is a traditionalist. He accepts an already existing poetic background. whose function is to provide the poem's incidental symbolism. Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* is conceived within the framework of the classical epic. using its accepted symbols. It is in this acceptance that he is a neo-classicist; it is in the rejection of this that Shelley is not a classicist in his '*Prometheus Unbound*', '*Alastor*' and '*Mab Queen*'. Eliot, like Pope, accepts the value of the traditional literature as his poetic world. For this see '*The Waste Land*', where he blends traditional Europe and Eastern thought which is the necessary background to his interpretation of the contemporary problem. The basic symbolism in this poem is derived from the Grail legend, and, particularly in the last section, he introduces the journey symbol, which is a well-defined feature of European legend.

For a closer parallel between Eliot's usage and Pope's one should go to a passage from Tillotson's '*On the Poetry of Pope*'. It is to be pointed here that Eliot's system of allusion makes his symbolism objective and complete. His poem is related to the objective background. It is in this factor more than in the projection of a poem into the person of another, character that we find Eliot's 'objective correlative'. It is further to be pointed out that Eliot's use of allusion is not always for emphasis by parallelism. Frequently, as hinted by Mr. Maxwell, a contrast is implied; sometimes one allusion may contain at once a parallel and a contrast. "By his technique of allusion and quotation Eliot indicates his acceptance of an objective symbolism, as the Augustans accepted that of the classical gods and goddesses, nymphs and satyrs." (Maxwell). Of course, the poet has a right to create symbols within limits and contextual, as Eliot has done by inventing 'Dog' as a purely arbitrary symbol for spiritual awareness.

Eliot regards tradition as the substitute for the classical mythology to work as a background to provide—imagery and symbolism in his poetry. The sense of tradition gives due regard to the past, intensifies the feeling, shapes the content of the poem, retains the suggestiveness which does so much to differentiate poetry from prose. It also "attempts to eliminate excessive blurring of the object, which tended to result from Romantic usage." It actually does not require the romantic atmosphere of mystery as in '*Alastor*' by Shelley. At this place it is proper to dwell upon the contents forming 'The Nature of Classicism' in Eliot's poetry as suggested by Fei-Pai Lu in his wise dissertation '*T. S. Eliot : The Dialectical Structure of His Theory of Poetry*.' He summarizes Eliot's classicism essentially consisting in three points : Personality, Tradition and Orthodoxy. Personality though extinct, takes the shape of individually and enlivens a poet;

the "impersonal" mode of reception in opposed to the very nature and function of poetry. Owing to this conception of poetry as self-realization and self-integration, which from the features of a given poet's personality, that we like him most. But Eliot, like Yeats emphasizes the inner integrity of the personality. It is due to this integrity that Eliot regards Dr. Johnson's '*The Vanity of Human Wishes*', Goldsmiths' '*The Deserted Village*', George Herbert's '*The Temple*' as the testimony of their greatness. Shakespeare, Herbert and Herrick all are 'major' poets for the same reason.

Tradition in Eliot's concept provides room for originality, but originality as he conceives it is a result of the individualization of the one. Tradition is susceptible to "petrifaction" if it is static and incapable of assimilation. It is threatened with dissolution" if the new parts are odd and eccentric. It admits "experimentation" to bring to it freedom of expression, yet it is a movement of "destiny." It gives us the "historical sense," which is an instrument for the discovery of the whole.

Orthodoxy is a part of the "social sanction," mainly consisting of two parts ; the second being "tradition," as Eliot has bifurcated in '*After Strange Gods*.' "Tradition" is contrasted to "Orthodoxy" ; the former is equated with communal habits and communal feelings, the latter with the formulated system of common beliefs "a matter which calls for the exercise of all our conscious intelligence." Tradition "characterizes a group throughout generations" and is largely "unconscious" ; it represents "the blood kinship of 'the same people living in the same place'." Tradition is bound to 'communicate' and orthodoxy to 'humanity' under the direction of the church. Thus religion, culture, and society are the main considerations of Orthodoxy, as outlined by Eliot in his sociological studies,' '*The Idea of a Christian Society*' and '*Notes Towards the Definition of Culture*.'

Society, is, thus, a 'spiritual community," not the congregation of a mob ; and culture is 'the incarnation (so to speak) of religion," and not "a flurry of uncoordinated activities." Common culture and ordered society are essential conditions for the production of classics, which for the most part, depend upon the vitality of religion. So church and religion in a "primitive" society contribute a lot to the making of culture.

Needless to say that Eliot's technique gains in conciseness. His part may be obscure, but his whole is clear and precise. And conciseness, precision, balance, order, harmony, unity in diversity are the characteristics of conventional classicism to which Eliot aspires, a reaction against the diffuseness of Romantic poetry, and especially of later Romantic poetry. Eliot's method is based on associations aroused in the reader's mind by an allusion to the

background of tradition. "Much of his description is by implication." *(Maxwell)*.

To turn to another quality of the classical poetry, no school of English poetry has so consistently based its art upon satirical wit as the Augustan. Wit disappeared with the ascent of the Romantic school. Eliot is the first to use it again, blending in it his use of the manner of Augustan wit with the purpose of metaphysical wit. The latter he has defined himself as levity intended to intensify the serious. Eliot does not simply aim at evoking wit or provoking amusement in his poems. He is often taken with "ironic reverie." His use of wit is in the same manner as in Pope's. Wit served for "resolution" or "integration" in his poetry. Eliot thought it proper to poetry. Wit requires brevity, careful phrasing and concern for clarity of thought and expression. Apart from this purpose, Eliot's wit indicates a view of life rather similar to that of Pope's.

Eliot is always ironical when he ceases to be a moralist. Irony, wit, laughter, pun, metaphor, the use of symbol all formed for Eliot the sings of a high civilization. Eliot's satirical bias remains intact in his early nonmoral poems as well as in its later moral poems. And it is wholly Agustan bent of mind.

Finally, Eliot had a keen desire to maintain verbal precision. His precision demands conscious choice and experiment rather than a transcription of sub-conscious dictation. Its ideal is phrasing—

"*Where every word is at home,*
Taking its place to support the others,
The word neither diffident nor ostentatious.
An easy commerce of the old and new,
The common word exact without vulgarity,
The formal word precise but not pedantic,
The complete consort dancing together."

(Little Gidding—lines 217-223).

The emphasis here is on exactness and precision which must not give the impression of stiffness. It is the same idea as Pope's :

"*True case in Writing comes from art, not chance*
As those move easiest who have learned to dance."

The imagery remains the same in Eliot and Pope. But Eliot's admission of 'the common word' provided a wider field of choice than what Pope did by emphasising a closer connection with popular speech than one could get in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries. Eliot's search for precision makes room for clarity by limiting suggestiveness in some measure.

Eliot protested that twentieth century poetry did not appreciate the value of authority at a time when authority was most needed. He looked upon poetry as a legislative body and a religious institution. To him, the poet as an artist must maintain the pattern of tradition. It gives a historical association and background. The poet is "involved with past and future." With the future because he is ensuring the continuance of tradition and therefore of art; with the past because he must do this by exploring the past to discover a basis for experimenting. His experiments will be made mature by further explorations, which will "form a new mind and a new personality." (*Maxwell*) The journey thus will end where it began, in the mind. But it will be now a mind whose structure is better understood :

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.

(*Little Gidding*, lines 239-242).

Q. 53. Eliot's longer poems are more like film-shots, as they present to the reader a series of graphic pictures.

Or

Write an essay on Eliot's use of imagery in his poetry.

Ans. Miss Caroline Spurgeon has shown it to the literary world that imagery in a poetic dramatist deserves a full-scale treatment to probe into the working of his mind. Though she chose Shakespeare for her investigations, ours is an author of the contemporary scene, T.S. Eliot. By writing some valuable critical essays on Elizabethan dramatists, Eliot has made it plain enough to grasp the hints that he, too, was not unlike them in the selection of words and phrases and images. Like Shakespeare's 'OOOO' that he puts in the mouth of crazy King Lear at the horrible moment surcharged with passion, or '*Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow*' that he lets the murderous monster speak when life seemed meaningless to him, Eliot does the same sort of thing in *The Waste Land* :

O O O O that Shakespeherian Rag—
It's so elegant
So intelligent
"What shall I do now ? What shall I do ?"

Everyone today talks of Eliot's use of 'objective correlatives' and the indirect method of conveying his emotion. His method succeeds in his poetry because it relies on images and symbols. Let

us now see how Eliot employs images in his poems. But, first of all, a word about the relationship of imagery and Imagism.

Imagism is a movement in poetry. It aimed at presenting poetry with clear-cut subject, accurate and economical language, concrete metaphor and sharply visualized and vivid imagery Mr. Pinto has summarized the salient characteristics of Imagist movement in the following manner :

(i) To use the language of common speech, but to employ always the exact word, not the nearly exact, nor the merely decorative word.

(ii) To produce poetry that is hard and clear, and not to deal in vague generalities, however magnificent and sonorous.

(iii) To create new rhythms and to copy old rhythms, which merely echo old moods.

(iv) The Imagists wrote in free verse and it was their studied craftsmanship that made the *vers libre* so popular. From the very beginning, they showed their antipathy against rhyme and metre, and Flint wrote acidly against the predominance of rhyme and metre in poetry. "Rhyme and metre are artificial and external additions to poetry, and that as the various changes that can be rung upon them were worked out, they grew more and more insipid until they have come to be contemptible and encumbering" Along with the *vers libre*, the theory of rhythm was on unique cotribution of the Imagists to English poetry.

(v) Certain achievements of the Imagists are undeniable. Against much of the hollow wordiness of contemporary English poetry, they brought a certain hardness and precision which were too much needed at that time. They aimed at brilliant effects and their fondness for clear expression provided a happy contrast to empty vagueness and cloying softness of the Georgian poetry. Finding the traditional technique to be inadequate the Imagists wanted to create a very precise and concentrated expression for a new sort of consciousness. The Imagist movement was inspired by aesthetic aims.

(vi) The limitation of the Imagists was that they were so much conscious of their being strikingly different and dissimilar from other poets that they often failed to produce genuine poetry. They lived too much among books and lacked both fundamental brain-work and contact with contemporary actualities. "They aimed at the clarity and concentration of the classic Chinese lyric and the Greek epigram but not realize that these forms grew out of highly civilized societies in conditions which did not exist in early twentieth century England." Much of the Imagist poetry is marred by affectation and artificiality. It was the work of the American

poets, especially Pound and Eliot, that had something new to offer and thereby enliven the English poetry.

(vii) The final judgment of the Imagists has been determined by L. Durrell. In his opinion, "The movement was doomed to perish as all movements will when real poets get in amongst them. But for a time the name Imagism was a convenient point of reference for those poets who felt anti-traditional—Eliot, Pound, and even perhaps D.H. Lawrence. Much of the work of this time was weak and shapeless, but much was good."

If the bare structure of the poem is its skeleton, the words and images evoked in it are its sinews and its nervous system. In Eliot's case, the use of imagery is of highest importance, since it adds quality and charm to his work. His poems are filled with images of great clarity and precision. His faculty of evoking images strikes us the moment we go through his poems.

The precision of many of the images gives clearness of outline and a formal, objective beauty, such as in the following :

The showers beat
On broken blinds and chimney and chimney-pots,
And at the corner of the street
A lonely cab-horse steams and stamps.

(Preludes, I)

The complementary imprecision of much of the imagery cannot be said to have the same formal value. The charm of the indefinite in art lies rather in its spiritual effect. This suggestive indefiniteness may be found in the *Landscapes*, especially if we compare them with the *Preludes* :

Children's voices in the orchard
Between the blossom—and the fruit-time ;
Golden head, crimson head,
Between the green tip and the root.

The self-same suggestive quality may be gathered from the *Quartets* too :

Dry the pool, dry concrete, brown edged,
And the pool was filled with water out of sunlight,
And the lotos rose, quietly, quietly,
The surface glittered out of heart of light,
And they were behind us, reflected in the pool.
Then a cloud passed, and the pool was empty.

(Burnt Norton, I)

In *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* Eliot strikes the key-note of the poem by his modern, though horrible, imagery :

Let us go then, you and I.
When the evening is spread out against the key
Like a patient etherised upon a table;

Thereafter the image of the house-cat falling asleep occurs, which lends prop to the relaxed, aimless quality of the Prufrockian world :

For I have known them all already, known them all :
Have known the evenings, mornings, afternoons,
I have measured out my life with coffee spoons;
I know the voices dying with a dying fall
Beneath the music from a farther room.
So how should I presume ?

Eliot has successfully drawn pictures in miniature in the following lines :

I should have been a pair of ragged claws
Scu'ting across the floors of silent seas.

Or, in :

But as if a magic lantern threw the nerves in
patterns on a screen :

And the final image of "the mermaids singing, each to each" summarizes nicely Prufrock's character and his plight. The scene is transferred from "the room" where "the women come and go/ Talking of Michelangelo" to "the chambers of the sea" surrounded by "sea-girls". Prufrock can immerse himself in the life-giving sea only in dream—"Till human voiees wake us, and we drown."—, but even then it is essentially his passive self that is projected, and he is unable to ride "seaward on the waves." Really he is a fish out of the water.

Eliot's longer poems are more like film-shots, as they present to the reader a series of graphic pictures. He combines in them a series of beautiful pictures of images in such a way as to produce a total effect. His music, his rhythm, his rhyme and his from tend to serve this end.

Eliot's greatest achievement in poetry is '*The Waste Land*' (1922). In this long poem we have a series of vividly striking pictures. There is Madame Sosotris, the famous clairvoyante ; the crwd crossing London Bridge on a winter morning, the two interiors of Part II—the romantic boudoir of the first lady and the bar in the pub of the second, the river Thames and Mr. Eugenides (the Smyrna merchant), the typist and the seductive clerk, and in the final section (Part V), the vague pictures of crows in rebellious anger, the mysterious third person and the 'hooded' hordes, and the mechanized woman playing music on her stretched-out hair as if it were a violin. Though no definite interpretation of the poem

is possible, much depends, for this arduous job, on how one interprets these pictures and images according to one's beliefs about society, love and religion.

In producing images an artist has to depend on the right choice of similes and metaphors. Eliot, of course, makes use of conventional imagery, true to his proclamation of being "a classicist in literature." He employs simple nnd straight forward similes and metaphors. *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* opens with a simile (see the second and third lines). Such easy-way similes are quite helpful in creating a clear impression about the objects or events described. Another such an obvious simile is to be sensed in the following :

My life is light, waiting for the death wind,
Like a feather on the back of my hand.

(*A Song for Simeon*)

Or, in *The Waste Land :*

At the violet hour, when the eyes and back
Turn upward from the desk, when the human engine waits
Like a taxi throbbing waiting,......

For the proper use of metaphors, one may look up the following :

The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the windo-panes,
The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the windo-panes,
Licked its tongue into the corners of the evening
Lingered upon the pools that stand in drains,
Let fall upon its back the soot that falls from chimneys,
Slipped by the terrace, made a sudden leap,
And seeing that it was a soft October night,
Curled once about the house, and fell asleep.

(*The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*)

In the above-quoted lines the picture of an animal, a cat most likely, has been painted, though the poet is actually describing here the yellow fog and smoke creating a peculiar atmosphere, to make the description vivid and graspable, the poet resorts to an unusual and a startling imagery. But he does not go astray from the object of depiction, and the conventional method serves as a pointer to him. The poet has succeeded in showing the way in which the fog intrudes stealthily into the last corners.

Eliot's *Four Quartets*' contain references here and there to the poetic creed of the poet. He tells therein that :

Words move, music moves .
Only in time,

Or that

Words strain,
Crack and sometimes break, under the burden,
Under the tension, slip, slide, perish,
Decay with imprecision, will not stay in place,
Will not stay still,

(Burnt Norton, V)

Both the excerpts speak of precision that a poet ought to incorporate in his work. They as well speak of the practice of Eliot in his poetry. A similar idea is contained in the following lines of *Little Gidding* :

And every phrase
And sentence that is right (where every word is at home.
Taking its place to support the others.
....
The complet consort dancing together.

But it is to be borne in mind that Eliot's use of imagery merges into symbolism when he reaches the *Quartets*. And when an image becomes a symbol "It is simplified and reduced to bare outlines." Under such conditions, "Details and appurtenances of the particular object or event are shorn away, and usually only something that resembles a geometrical figure remains, as in heraldic beasts and plants."

The images that occur in Eliot's later poetry are not so simple and straightforward, as can be gathered even from *Portrait of a Lady* :

The voice returns like the insistent out-of-tune
Of a broken violin on an August afternoon :

(Part II)

Though the general effect is quite clear even here. Mark the obscure touch in the following image :

Every street lamp that I pass
Beats like a fatalistic drum,
And through the spaces of the dark
Midnight shakes the memory
As a madman shakes a dead geranium.

(Rhapsody on a Windy Night)

The first two lines are not so hard to follow as the last three ones are.

Eliot's images are used at first in a comparative naturalistic But as time goes on, we notice now assignments to them.

By the time the *Four Quarters* was written, the poet had developed almost a complete code of symbols.

As one goes through Eliot's images, one seems to recognize a number of basic scenes which in elaborated and differentiated forms constitute much of his vision. There are the sea mist, the pines and thrushes of Cape Ann ; things thrown up by the sea ; a drowned body ; an orchard and children climbing the trees in summer sunshine ; an arbour, flowers and a girl in a shower of April rain ; London fog and filth ; and the repeated experience of lying half awake towards morning. "Warfare has added little of direct imagery, but may be responsible for ideas and states of feeling, and probably for the ubiquity of death images (bones) and for the frequent images of corruption and destruction (rats, fire)."

Thus it has been noted that Eliot's images are drawn directly either from life or from experiences. They form part and partial of his eventful fike. "No one can more readily call up the dreary associations of filth and fog common to all who know big-city life, and the further psychological associations of hopelessness and loneliness intertwined with them." A few minor examples of Eliot's power to evoke such associations may be seen in the imagery of *Preludes*, *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*, *Portrait of a Lady*, *Morning at the Window*, *Rhapsody on a Windy Night*, etc. ; and a major example is to be had in the opening stanzas of *Prufrock*, or in *Burnt Norton* :

Men and bits of paper, whirled by the cold wind
That blows before and after time,
Wind in and out of unwholesome lungs
Time before and after.
Eructation of unhealthy souls
Into the faded air, the torpid
Driven on the wind that sweeps the gloomy hills
of London,
Hampstead and Clerkenwell, Campden and Putney,
Highgate, Primrose and Ludgate.
